

Regent congratulates Primakov

AMMAN (J.T.) — HRH Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, on Friday sent a cable to Yevgeny Primakov congratulating him on his new post as Russia's prime minister. Following is the Regent's cable: Your Excellency, His Majesty King Hussein has asked me to convey to his dear friend and brother his warmest congratulations on the confidence the Russian people have placed on you as prime minister of the Federal Russian Republic. Allow me also to express my personal respect and appreciation. On behalf of the government and people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, I wish you every success in your noble endeavours in the service of the great Russian people. Yours Sincerely, Prince Hassan. The new prime minister is a Middle East expert who won an overwhelming support in the State Duma (See story on page 12).

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Ross continues shuttles between leaders Palestinians protest, call for revenge after Israel's assassination of Hamas fugitives

Agencies

SHOUTING "WE want revenge now," hundreds of Hamas supporters marched in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Friday after Israel killed the group's two top fugitives. In two towns, protesters clashed with Israeli troops.

The Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), vowed to detonate more suicide bombings in Israel to avenge the deaths of brothers Imad and Adel Awadallah. Bracing for attacks, Israel sealed off the West Bank and Gaza Strip and security forces were placed on high alert.

The new tension came as U.S. Mideast envoy Dennis Ross shuffled between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders in hopes of concluding a deal on a West Bank troop withdrawal.

A new outbreak of violence would make it exceedingly difficult for Ross to negotiate a breakthrough and end a 17-month stalemate.

On the third day of his mission, Ross met Friday with Palestinian security chiefs to discuss the possible release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Later in the day, Ross was to hold talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

He had said on Thursday that Israelis and Palestinians were interested in breaking an 18-month impasse in Middle East peacemaking but still had many differences to overcome.

"The initial set of discussions, I think, reflect that both sides are interested in trying to find a way forward and we'll see if we can do it," Ross said hours after meeting Netanyahu on the second day of his mediation mission.

"We're always hopeful but we also have to deal with realities. There are a lot of different issues that still have to be sorted out," he told reporters.

Asked earlier if his mission would help deflect attention

from the White House sex scandal plaguing President Bill Clinton, Ross smiled slightly but did not respond.

The killings triggered protest marches and clashes. In the town of El Bireh, some 300 people marched from the home of the Awadallah family to the nearby Jewish settlement of Psagot, shouting "revenge, revenge." Some 200 marchers threw stones and empty bottles at Israeli troops who sprayed the crowd with rubber-coated steel pellets.

Five people were injured, including a WTN cameraman. In the West Bank town of Bethlehem, several dozen teen-agers armed with slingshots threw stones at Israeli soldiers guarding Rachel's Tomb, an Israeli enclave in the Palestinian city.

Troops did not respond. In Nablus, also in the West Bank, about 1,000 Hamas supporters clamoured for revenge chanting "we want bombings."

In Gaza City, Hamas supporters led by the group's founder, Ahmad Yassin, shouted "we want revenge now," shaking their fists in the air.

A leaflet distributed during the march said that Hamas will take revenge and "create an earthquake under the Zionists' feet." The retaliation will be similar in scope to the response to the 1996 killing of Hamas' chief bombmaker, Yahya Ayyash, it said.

At the time, Hamas detonated four suicide bombings that killed dozens of Israelis, disrupted peace talks and brought Israel's hardline leader, Netanyahu, to power.

The Awadallah brothers were killed Thursday afternoon in a remote house surrounded by vineyards and orchards near the village of Taibeh, west of the West Bank town of Hebron. The safehouse is in an area under full Israeli security control.

Netanyahu's adviser, David Bar-Ilan, suggested that the

Awadallah brothers were killed in a carefully planned ambush.

"This is another example of terrorists known for killing Israelis being pursued wherever they are," Bar-Ilan said.

Palestinian peace negotiator Hassan Asfour condemned the killings as "a terrorist act." Israel has killed Islamists in the past, including Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shekaki, who was shot to death outside a Malta hotel in 1995 by gunmen on a motorcycle.

In Thursday's incident, Palestinian witnesses said they saw a truck and four vans pull up to the Taibeh safehouse at about 4 p.m. Dozens of men jumped out and surrounded the house, the witnesses said. Minutes later, shots were heard. There were conflicting reports about whether the men wore army uniforms or not.

The army would only say that troops raided the home after shots and an explosion were heard and that the two fugitives were killed in a gun battle with soldiers.

Adel Awadallah, commander of the Hamas military wing Izzeddine Al Qassam in the West Bank, headed Israel's most wanted list.

Imad Awadallah, also a leading figure in Izzeddine Al Qassam, escaped from a Palestinian jail last month. He had been held on suspicion that he killed a fellow Hamas fugitive,



Supporters of Hamas shout anti-Israeli slogans during a rally on Friday against the killing of Hamas activists Imad and Adel Awadallah by Israeli troops in Hebron on Thursday (Reuters photo)

Mohieddine Sharif, in a fight over power and money. Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai said the

two were killed as they prepared another bombing. He said they were responsible for the deaths of five Israelis.

Mystery of bomber's end may never be solved

TEL AVIV (R) — A murder mystery that has puzzled Palestinians and Israelis since March has deepened with the violent death of the one man who may have known the answer to a whodunit worthy of a best-seller.

The killing by Israeli troops on Thursday of Imad Awadallah, a leading member of the armed wing of the militant Islamic movement Hamas, lengthens a trail of murky events that stretches back six months to a rainy Sunday in the West Bank. Awadallah died with his fugitive brother Adel just days after the Palestinian security

chief in the West Bank, Jibril Al Rajoub, had called him the key to resolving a riddle that started literally with a bang on March 29.

Alerted that night by an explosion in a small workshop near the town of Ramallah, Palestinian police went to the scene and found the naked body of a man lying next to the wreck of a car.

The corpse was that of Mohieddine Al Sharif, the master bomb maker for Hamas's military wing and Israel's number one

(Continued on page 3)

Weather cools starting today

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan can expect a drop in temperatures Saturday to 33 degrees Celsius, down from 38 degrees recorded in the Amman region on Thursday, an official at the Meteorological Department announced Friday.

The official told the Jordan Times the recent heat wave was the result of a depression centred over the Red Sea and Sudan causing daytime temperatures to soar to 38 degrees in the Amman region and more than 48 degrees in the Jordan Valley.

He said the maximum temperatures for Amman on Saturday are expected to be 33 during the day and 20 at night. On Thursday the temperature reached 26 degrees, according to the official.

The department's Director General Haitham Shaer said the heat wave in September and August has had adverse

effects on the underground water resources because it caused an increase in the amount of evaporation.

The heat wave, the most severe since 1920, caused temperatures to soar at times during August to 42 degrees in Amman and to 48.8 degrees in the Jordan Valley, said Shaer. He said it is not unusual for Jordan to witness heat waves during the month of September department records.

Meanwhile the Ministry of Health has warned the public against the danger of sun strokes saying people, especially children and citizens suffering from high blood pressure, diabetes or kidney ailments should avoid going out in the peak heat hours and should drink large quantities of water. If forced to go out, the ministry said, people should cover their heads and wear light garments.

The Ministry of Agriculture

has prepared a report on the damages to the agricultural crops in southern Shuneh in the Jordan Valley. The report said though the heat wave caused the leaves of banana plants to wither it did not have a major effect on the banana crops.

Ahmad Rahaleh, head of the Operations Department at the Civil Defence Department (CDD) said the heat waves in Jordan over the past two months caused 36 cases of sun stroke.

He said there were 20 reported cases of drowning and 43 cases of food poisoning during the heat wave so far. In addition, Rahaleh said, the department recorded 150 cases of fire during the past three months occurring mostly in wooded areas an eight per cent increase over the same period during the summer of last year.

Iran asks U.N. for better reaction on diplomats

Agencies

IRAN ON Friday asked the United Nations Security Council to show "appropriate reaction" against the Afghan Taliban movement for the killing of at least nine Iranian diplomats, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said.

IRNA said the call was made in a telephone conversation between Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi and United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan.

"This atrocious act is a clear example of war crimes and crimes committed against humanity," IRNA quoted Kharrazi as telling Annan.

IRNA said Kharrazi also requested Annan to "ask the Security Council to show an appropriate reaction towards the recent crime by the Taliban, in addition to preventing the criminals from escalating massacres and ethnic cleansing in Afghanistan."

Security Council members on Thursday condemned the killing of at least nine Iranian diplomats by the Islamist Taliban militia in Afghanistan and called for an "urgent investigation into these crimes" in order to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Iranian President Mohammad Khatami vowed on Friday to "fully pursue" the case of nine Iranian diplomats killed by Taliban Islamist fighters when they seized the northern Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif.

"The death of our innocent representatives is the outcome of Taliban's tendency for violence, savagery and ignorance," he charged, quoted by IRNA.

"Iran with a firm will will pursue this human and political catastrophe on a national and international level," Khatami added.

He also described the Sunni Muslim Taliban as a "rigid-minded, irrational and adventurist" movement, "which has made the oppressed people of Afghanistan a victim of its ethnic cleansing."

"I hope that with the help of all independent nations, notably Islamic, the land of Afghanistan will be safe and free and humanity will be rid of this mischief," the president of Shiite Muslim Iran said.

Former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani vowed on Friday that his country will take revenge for the murder of its diplomats in Afghanistan.

"We will not let it go easily. We cannot ignore this," he said in a sermon during weekly Muslim prayers at Tehran University.

Tension between Iran and the Taliban has been mounting since 11 Iranian diplomats and one journalist went missing last month after forces of Afghanistan's purist Islamic group seized the northern opposition stronghold of Mazar-e-Sharif.

Earlier on Friday, Tehran said two of its diplomats had survived the attack and that efforts were being made to get information on their plight.

'Bamiyan will fight Taliban'

ISLAMABAD (R) — Shiite Muslims in the opposition-held central Afghan city of Bamiyan will fight approaching Taliban forces or face ethnic slaughter, a spokesman for a key anti-Taliban faction said on Saturday.

The Hezb-e-Wahdat spokesman denied reports that civilians were fleeing the city to escape advancing Taliban fighters and said the 10,000-strong population of the town was arming itself to fight.

"People are getting armed to prepare themselves against the Taliban; they want to defend the town, their homes, dignity and honour," the spokesman, contacted by telephone, told Reuters.

The Hezb-e-Wahdat spokesman denied reports that Iranian or any other planes had landed at Bamiyan airport but aid sources said Iranian planes landed and left in the past 48 hours.

It was assumed they had ferried supplies to the faction.

The Taliban have accused Iran of supplying supplies to factions it supports, Iran denies the charge.

The advance of the radical Sunni Muslim Taliban militia has raised fears that Shiite Iran will intervene to protect its co-religionists in Bamiyan and diplomats are concerned that Tehran might want to get revenge for the murder of nine Iranian diplomats.

London-based human rights group Amnesty International accused the Taliban of massacring members of the Shiite Hazara ethnic group and Tajiks when their force overran the northern opposition stronghold of Mazar-e-Sharif last month.

The Hezb-e-Wahdat spokesman said Bamiyan people would fight rather than face the same fate.

"They know that if they do not fight they will face the same destiny as the Hazaras did in Mazar. They know that the Taliban kill fighters and civilians and will not let the town fall."

Iran has not reacted to the Taliban's advance on Bamiyan, but said last week that it did not plan to intervene militarily.

An independent news agency,

The Taliban has announced that some of its fighters "acting on their own" killed the nine diplomats and said it would find and punish the killers.

Iran has amassed a 70,000-strong Revolutionary Guards force near the border with Afghanistan. An Iranian newspaper said on Thursday that Tehran was sending additional forces from the regular army to the area.

Afghan Islamic Press (AIP), quoted Taliban officials as saying their fighters had met little resistance and were only 10 kilometres from Bamiyan.

"A big offensive on the town is possible at any time," a Taliban official told AIP. "Now we are only 10 kilometres from the city and the opposition has hundreds of fighters along the road." Taliban officials told AIP that opposition fighters had dynamited roads and passes to block their rivals' advance but said that Taliban fighters were now clearing the debris.

It said eight opposition commanders had defected to the advancing Taliban and quoted Taliban sources as saying that current fighting was light but could escalate at any time.

The Taliban advance, and admission that their fighters killed Iranian diplomats, has sharpened tension between the Taliban and Iran which backs the Shiite Hezb-e-Wahdat and Harkat-ul-Islami factions in Afghanistan.

Pakistan, one of only three states which recognise the Taliban as the Afghan government, condemned the killing of the Iranians and urged Iran and the Taliban to exercise restraint.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman "urged the governments of the two brotherly Islamic countries to exercise restraint and resolve their differences through peaceful negotiations." The spokesman dismissed Iranian allegations that Pakistan, through its support for the Taliban, was responsible for the diplomats' deaths.

"Pakistan cannot accept this accusation as it cannot be held responsible or accountable for events in a third country," the statement said.

The Taliban had taken Mazar-e-Sharif once before, in May last year, but they were driven out after a bloody uprising started by the Hazaras in which hundreds of Taliban fighters were killed in street battles and thousands more captured.

Mass graves found near Mazar-e-Sharif last year seem to indicate that many of the Taliban prisoners were subsequently killed.

As the Lewinsky affair takes turn towards possible impeachment: White House sends counter-report to Congress in attempt to preempt Star

WASHINGTON (AP) — The White House made a dramatic effort Friday to preempt Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr's allegations, sending its own report to Congress declaring that President Bill Clinton did not commit perjury, obstruct justice, tamper with witnesses or abuse the power of his office.

The report said Clinton had acknowledged having an improper sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky and added "the disclosure of lurid and salacious allegations can only be intended to humiliate the president and force him from office."

"Impeachment is a matter of incomparable gravity. Even to discuss it is to discuss overturning the electoral will of the people," Clinton's personal and White House lawyers wrote.

"We do not believe the OIC [Office of Independent Counsel] can identify any conduct remotely approaching" the impeachment standard, said the 73-page rebuttal written by Attorney David Kendall and White House Counsel Charles Ruff and their associates.

"Instead from press reports, if true, it appears that the OIC has dangerously overreached

to describe in the most dramatic of terms conduct that not only is not criminal but is actually proper and lawful," they added.

The report was released by the White House less than an hour after lawmakers voted to make public a report by Starr that is expected to accuse him of 11 impeachable offenses.

Among them perjury, obstruction of justice, witness tampering and abuse of presidential power in his effort to conceal a relationship with Lewinsky.

The Clinton rebuttal was part of a massive counteroffensive, carefully planned in secret over the last few days by the president's top troubleshooters. It was preceded earlier in the day by a dramatic and emotional statement by the president himself that included his first public apology to Lewinsky.

"I don't think there is a fancy way to say that I have sinned," he said, his eyes glistening. He promised, though, to vigorously battle the allegations against him.

White House spokesman Joe Lockhart said the rebuttal, dispatched to a half-dozen House leaders, was not based on any advance peek at Starr's

report. "We don't know what's in the report, but we can read the newspapers," he said.

The White House report was sent to leaders of the House judiciary committee, Speaker Newt Gingrich, Minority Leader Dick Gephardt and House Oversight Committee Chairman Bill Thomas, Lockhart said.

The document offered a point-by-point rebuttal of allegations expected to be contained in Starr's report. The White House was not permitted an advance look at Starr's document.

The White House rebuttal said that Clinton had acknowledged "a serious mistake" in his relationship with Lewinsky.

"This private mistake does not amount to an impeachable action," the report said. It went on to say that Starr's report was based "entirely on allegations obtained by the grand jury" and said that grand juries "are not designed to search for the truth."

Denying all the allegations of criminal misconduct, the report asserted: "This means that the OIC report is left with nothing but the details of a private sexual relationship, told in graphic details with the intent

to embarrass."

The report dismissed as "meritless" Starr's "attempts to evoke images of Watergate by charging that the president has abused the powers of his office."

Clinton's lawyers asserted that President Richard Nixon's use of the CIA to thwart an FBI criminal investigation of himself fit the constitutional framers' definition of corrupt use of the office for personal gain. But, the lawyers wrote, "President Clinton's lawful assertion of privilege in a court of law and the [White House] counsel's office conduct of its official duties plainly does not."

The White House report rebutted allegations that Clinton perjured himself in January when he denied in a deposition in the Paula Jones sexual harassment suit that he had had sex with Lewinsky. Clinton publicly denied eight months ago that he had had sex with Lewinsky but then reversed himself in August and admitted that he had.

In a civil deposition he gave narrow answers to ambiguous questions, the attorneys said. "As a matter of law, those answers could not give rise to a criminal charge of perjury. In

the face of the president's admission of his relationship, the disclosure of lurid and salacious allegations can only be intended to humiliate the president and force him from office."

The report asserted: "Given the flimsy and unsubstantiated basis for the accusations, there is a complete lack of credible evidence to initiate an impeachment inquiry concerning the president. And the principal purpose of the investigation, and the OIC's report, is to embarrass the president and titillate the public by producing a document that is little more than an unreliable, one-sided account of sexual behaviour."

The White House report said that Clinton "did not commit perjury. Most of the illegal leaks suggesting his testimony was perjurious falsely describe his testimony."

It also said there was no obstruction of justice. "The president never asked Ms. Lewinsky to get rid of the gifts (that he had given her) and he never asked (personal secretary Betty) Currie to get them. We believe that Ms. Currie's testimony supports the president's."

Tanzania expels Iraqis, Libyan questioned over bombings

DAR ES SALAAM (AP) — Tanzania expelled five Iraqis and a Libyan who were questioned by the FBI and police in connection of the bombing of two U.S. embassies in East Africa last month, a newspaper reported Friday.

Immigration officials escorted the Libyan, Atif Issa Enhamad, to the airport and put him on a flight to an undisclosed Middle East destination, said Uhuru, or Freedom, a Swahili newspaper owned by the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party.

Five Iraqis, whose names were not disclosed, also were deported, the newspaper said. It gave no reason for the expulsions and Tanzania's criminal investigation and immigration departments could not be reached for comment.

Nearly simultaneous bombings at U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, on Aug. 7 killed 258 people, including 12 Americans, and injured more than 5,500 people. Of those killed, 11 were killed in Tanzania.

Two key suspects in the Kenya bombing have been handed over to the United States for trial. American authorities allege the attacks were plotted by Saudi terrorist Osama Ben Laden.

On Sunday, Tanzanian police and FBI agents said they had made "extraordinary discoveries," having determined what the Dar es Salaam bomb was made of and who carried it to the embassy. They refused to provide details.

Media reports in Tanzania have said the ingredients for the bombs had originated in the Middle East and were transferred by sea via the Comoros Islands to Tanzania.

Reports in Kenya said the components of the bomb that exploded in Nairobi were transported by road from Tanzania to Kenya.

The East African nations share a long and mostly unguarded border.

Turkish-Libyan relations soured by Kurdish marchers

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey has recalled its ambassador to Libya for consultations after a group linked to Kurdish separatists took part in a parade marking the Libyan revolution, diplomats in Ankara said Friday.

Ambassador Mufit Ozdes walked out of a ceremony marking the 29th anniversary of the Libyan revolution on September 1 after he saw activists belonging to the separatist Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) taking part in a Libyan military parade, said a foreign ministry official.

Before leaving for Ankara, Ozdes sent a note of protest to Libyan authorities.

The incident risks further straining the two countries' already tense relations.

Ates Balkan, who served as Turkey's previous ambassador in Tripoli, was permanently recalled last year and Ankara publicly expressed its hope to see the fall of Qadhafi, whom it accused of making "aggressive remarks" about Turkey.

Qadhafi went on television stating that "the Turkish army, which is run by Israel, is in confrontation with the Arab Nation," in a reference to Turkey's military accords with Israel.

In 1996, Qadhafi called Turkey "the slave of the United States" during a press conference in Libya with the Islamist party leader Necmettin Erbakan, then Turkish premier. Ankara then promptly recalled its ambassador Balkan for the first time.

Food airlift cuts famine deaths in southern Sudan

AJEP (AFP) — A massive airlift of food to southern Sudan, organised by the World Food Programme, has significantly reduced the number of famine deaths and the food situation has now stabilised, aid workers told AFP.

Each day four Ilyushin aircraft each with a capacity of 32 metric tonnes, eight C-130s each capable of carrying 16 tonnes amid six Buffaloes with a capacity of six tonnes, fly in the daily rotations of tens of thousands of Sudanese reduced to famine by prolonged warfare and unfavourable weather conditions.

"Things are starting to get a bit better," said Roger Teck, the coordinator of the Belgian Medicines Sans Frontiers charity organisation who this week visited Mapel south of Ajep, a town controlled by the rebel Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA).

Mortality rates, remained

"catastrophic" at about 10 per 10,000 people each day but were a clear improvement on the 25 deaths a day for 10,000 people recorded in Ajep in July, Teck said.

The chaos which reigned in Ajep a month ago has gone and people now queue in an orderly fashion to receive their rations. The humanitarian airlift launched two months ago, had "stabilised" the situation in the south of the country, though there was still an emergency, Bernard Barret, spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said Wednesday in Nairobi after spending seven weeks in Sudan.

The food, channelled through airports in Khartoum, Al Obeid (Sudan), Nairobi and Lokichokio in northern Kenya, is dropped both in rebel-held Ajep and on the other side of the river Jut to people in areas controlled by the government.

On one day this week, a U.N.-chartered Ilyushin-76 flew over Ajep and dropped about a ten tonnes of bagged maize on the parachute terrain. In three passages, the big aircraft dropped 32 tonnes of food before flying off to refill its cargo bay.

Another plane from Nairobi followed minutes later and repeated the operation. More than 70 tonnes of food — enough for 10,000 people for 18 days — were dropped on Ajep.

Across the river, another Ilyushin from Khartoum dropped the same quantity of food on Wau, the capital of Bahr Al Ghazal province which is controlled by government troops.

Teck backed up by Roger Graise, the number three director of the World Food Programme, said that in view of the small harvest expected this year in southern Sudan, food aid would be required at least until October 1999.

Somali police surround building where Italian nun is kept hostage

MOGADISHU (AFP) — Police have surrounded the house in which Italian nun Marzia Feurra has been kept hostage in the Huriwa district of south Mogadishu since Thursday, witnesses told AFP Friday.

A heavily-armed police force took up positions on roads leading to the house, witnesses said.

The commander of the police force, Colonel Abdi Hassan Awale Qeybid, was also seen in the area where the nun is kept hostage by the gunmen.

Earlier, Mogadishu Governor Hussein Ali Ahmad announced that clan factions in the Somali capital

had declared they will not allow a ransom to be paid for the release of the Italian nun.

She was named by SOS Kinderdorf International with whom she worked as "Sister Fuerra Maria Angela, alias Sister Marzia, of the Consolata Sisters."

Ahmad told AFP that the kidnapping was not political, but instigated by a man claiming to have been sacked from his post at the Austrian-funded SOS Kinderdorf Hospital, operated mostly by Italian nuns.

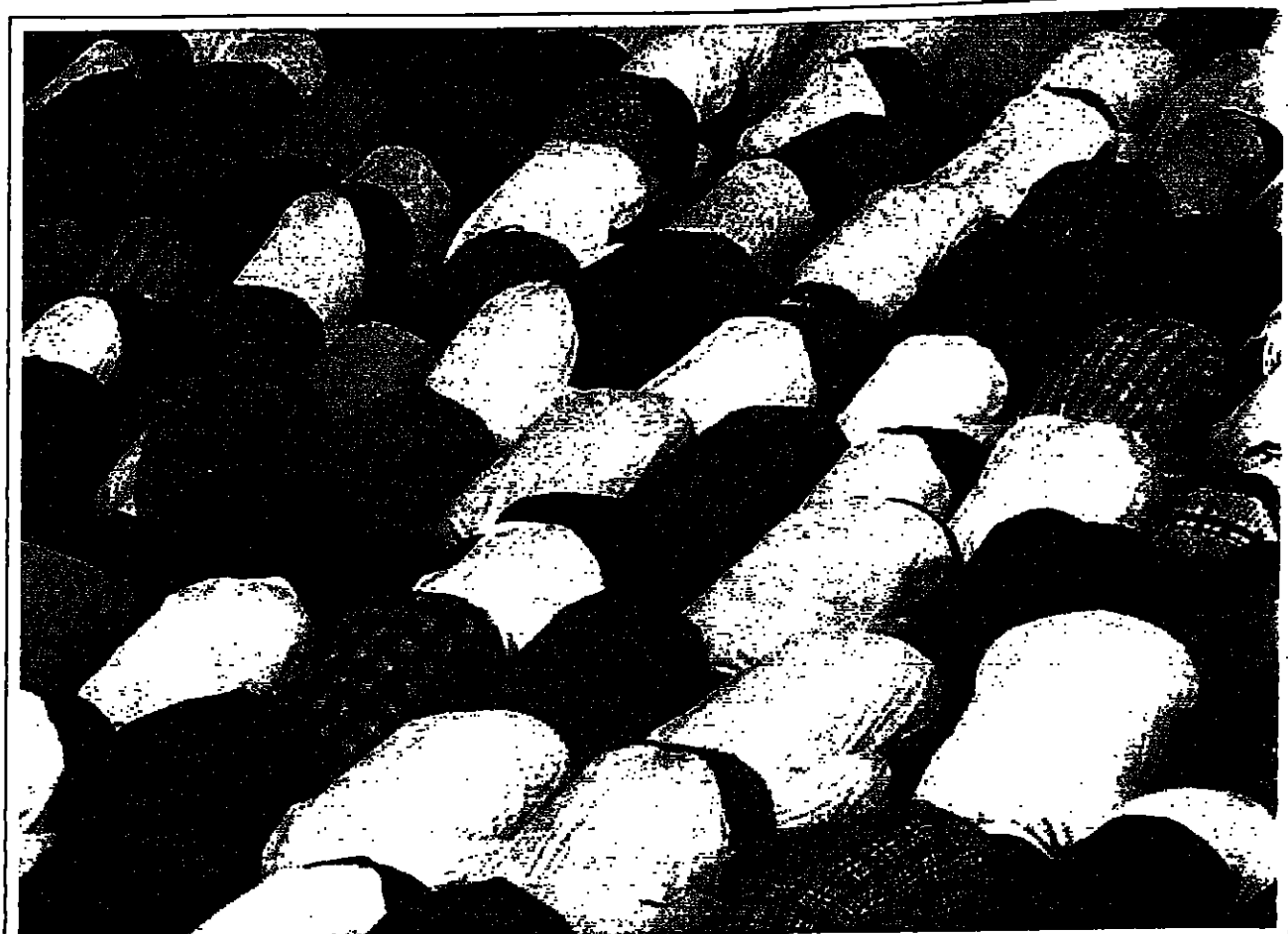
"I hope she will be released Friday, as we have contacted all the peo-

ple concerned, including relatives of the abductors," Ahmad said.

"The use of force is not essential at this stage," said Ahmad, who along with one of his two deputies and prominent Somali clan elder, have been negotiating with the abductors for her release.

The governor said that the 53-year-old nun, who has headed the SOS Emergency Paediatric Hospital for the last seven years, was visited on Friday by Somali nurse Asha Abdi Dini and found to be well.

At least a dozen gunmen seized the nun from the hospital in south Mogadishu on Thursday.



IRANIS PRAY AT FRIDAY PRAYERS IN TEHRAN: Iranians pray during Friday prayers at Tehran University. Before the prayers, Iran's former President Rafsanjani expressed his condolences to the families of the Iranian diplomats who were killed in Afghanistan and pledged that Iran would avenge the killings (Reuters photo)

Saudi crown prince on first trip to West in 10 years

LONDON (R) — The heir to the Saudi Arabian throne flies into London Sunday for his first visit to the West in 10 years with British officials saying that Crown Prince Abdullah's succession will be orderly and seamless.

It is the first stop on a month-long tour for the prince, heir apparent to the ailing King Fahd, which will take him to France, the United States and across Asia.

The visit — he will be lunching with both Queen Elizabeth and Prime Minister Tony Blair — comes at a crucial time with the world's largest oil producer and exporter beset by low oil prices and facing the threat of an economic slump.

Since the king, his older half-brother, was laid low by a stroke two years ago, Prince Abdullah has taken on more responsibility for the country's day-to-day running.

"It will be an orderly and seamless succession," forecast one senior British Foreign Office official.

British officials believe the prince would bring a more Arab touch to his foreign policy but there was nothing to suggest any hostility towards the United States.

"Saudi Arabia moves very gradually. There is an enormous stability there. You will not get U-turns when he takes over," the official said.

Diplomats and analysts have viewed him as being more cautious and traditionalist than King Fahd and possibly more

of a pan-Arab nationalist.

Britain views Saudi Arabia as a massively important market and it is the desert kingdom's second largest supplier after the United States.

But the fall in oil prices will have a knock-on effect.

"Inevitably across the Middle East, Western exports are likely to decline — but not yet," the official said.

The plunge in oil prices has meant that Prince Abdullah has had to be an active and hands-on heir apparent.

For Britain, the visit is a vital opportunity for the government to establish a close working relationship with him.

"Saudi Arabia is the key to the security of the Gulf. It is of the first importance to us," the official said. "There is no substitute for the leaders meeting eyeball to eyeball."

Officials believed that with Saudi government revenue falling by 25 per cent and retrenchment now the name of the game, there are some tough decisions coming up.

There is plenty of common ground between the Gulf war allies with Saudi Arabia and Britain agreeing that Iraq must be contained until the threat to the Gulf states has dissipated and its weapons of mass destruction eliminated.

"We have many important interests in common with the Saudis and it is very important we hear things from the horse's mouth," the official said of the crucial four-day visit.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bomb south of Algiers kills one, wounds 10

ALGIERS (AFP) — A bomb blast in a town 40 kilometres south of the Algerian capital killed one person and wounded 10 others, security services reported Friday. The explosion occurred in Larba overnight Thursday, said security services who gave no further details. Four soldiers were killed Tuesday when another bomb went off as they were patrolling land around 60 kilometres east of Algiers, reported the newspaper Le Matin. Two anti-Islamists were shot dead in an exchange of fire with the patrol, added.

Libya asks for 1 million Egyptian farmers

CAIRO (AP) — Libyan President Muammar Qadhafi wants one million Egyptians to farm land irrigated by a project known as the Great Man-Made River, Egypt's Middle East News Agency said Friday. The project was launched in 1984 to bring water from aquifers in the Sahara desert in southern Libya through 3,800 kilometres of pipes to cities on the Mediterranean coast. The water will be used to reclaim up to five million acres of desert land, although critics have warned that the water reserves may be short-lived and that the cost — as much as \$25 billion — could have been better spent elsewhere. The project is scheduled to be completed by 2001. Libya, with a population of just five million, has long sought to recruit Egyptian and Moroccan farmers to help farm the land. Already 500,000 Egyptians work in oil-rich Libya.

Rights group protests Yemeni's detention

DUBAI (AFP) — The journalists' rights group Reporters Without Borders protested Thursday against the detention without trial of a Yemeni reporter and asked that charges against him be clarified. The group's secretary general, Robert Menard, wrote to Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh protesting the holding of Mohammad Sadek Al Udaini and asking that the charges against him "be clearly identified." Udaini, who worked for Al Mithaq, the newspaper of the president's General People's Congress party, was arrested in December 1997 in the southern Yemeni province of Ibb after he was accused of causing a citizen's death. In an appeal Tuesday in the independent newspaper Attariq, Udaini insisted he was innocent and said he had been the target of a kidnapping attempt ordered by a notable in the province with whom he had problems.

Turkish coast guards stop immigrants

DATCA (AP) — A boat carrying 220 would-be immigrants, mostly Iraqi Kurds, was intercepted by the coast guard Friday in the Aegean as it tried to reach a Greek island, the Anatolia news agency said. The report said the immigrants were headed to the island of Sami, off this Turkish town. Would-be immigrants try to reach Greece, a European Union member, as a gateway to other EU countries. They usually enter Turkey on tourist visas.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

15:10 ...Cartoon — Postman Pat
15:30 ...Clowning Around
16:00 ...Drama — Neighbours
16:30 ...Doc. — Scandi Nature
17:00 French Programme — "Faut Pas Rever"
18:00 ...Drama — Sea Quest
19:00 ...Le Journal
19:15 French Programme — "L'œil de Colomb"
19:30 ...News headlines
19:35 Quiz Show — You Bet Your Life
19:55 ...Cinema, Cinema
20:30 ...Prism
21:10 ...Drama — Sirens
22:00 ...News in English
22:30 Feature film — A Mind to Murder
23:59 ...Country Music
00:30 ...End of T.V.

PRAYER TIMES

04:54 ...Fajr
06:12 ...Sunrise Doha
12:32 ...Dhuhr
16:04 ...Asr
18:52 ...Maghreb
20:10 ...Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweidish, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624853/4624811
St. Aftem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweidish
Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757
The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

WEATHER
Bulletin supplied by the Depart-

ment of Meteorology
Relative warm weather conditions will prevail with winds northwesterly moderate to active. On Sunday, temperatures are expected to dip. In Agaba, it will be hot, winds northerly moderate to active, and seas calm.
Min./Max. temp.
Amman21/33
Agaba25/39
Deserts20/37
Jordan Valley25/39
Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 33 Agaba 40. Humidity readings: Amman 33 per cent, Agaba 29 per cent.
Following are the highest temperatures expected today in the following areas:
Ajloun29
Jerash33
Um Qays34
Madaba34
Petra36
Dead Sea40

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....4637111
Civil Defence Department.....5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue.....4630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police 192.....4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade.....4617101
Blood Bank.....4775121
Highway Police.....5343402
Traffic Police.....4896390
Public Security Dept.....4630321
Hotel Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints.....5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints.....4897467
Amman Municipality Complaints.....787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance).....121
Overseas Calls.....010230

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic, Abdi5661317
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity.....4642816
Akileh Maternity.....4642412
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman.....4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5669131
University Hospital5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 5667227/9
Al-Ahli, Abdali5664164/6
Italian, Al-Mohajreen4771013
Al-Bashir.....4775111/26
Army, Marka891611/5
Queen Alia Hospital 5602240/50
Amal Hospital5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

DEPARTURES

08:30Damascus (RJ)
09:45New Delhi (RJ)
09:45Aden (RJ)
10:25Beirut (RJ)
10:30Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:45Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
11:20Colombo (RJ)
15:55New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:00Cairo (RJ)
17:30London (RJ)
22:55Milan, Rome (RJ)
23:30Berlin, Frankfurt (RJ)
02:30Madrid (RJ)
05:30Bangkok (RJ)

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:45Beirut (RJ)
11:45Berlin, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:00Amsterdam, Chicago
Detroit (RJ)
12:15Milan, Rome (RJ)
12:40Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
13:00Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
13:10Paris (RJ)
13:15Carlo (RJ)
13:15 Brussels, Amsterdam (RJ)
14:05London (RJ)
21:05Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
21:15Abu Dhabi, Bombay (RJ)
21:25Jeddah (RJ)
00:40Doha (add) (RJ)

OTHER FLIGHTS

06:05 London, Damascus (BA)
13:00Riyadh (SV)
14:10 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
15:05Vienna (OS)
16:25Dubai, Muscat (EK)
18:40Beirut (ME)
19:00Paris (AF)
19:05Frankfurt (LH)
23:35Cairo (MS)
23:40Amsterdam (KL)
01:05 London, Damascus (BA)
02:05Belgrade (JU)
03:00Rome (AZ)

ROYAL WINGS (RW)

10:20 Agaba (arriving at QAIA and proceeding to Marka Airport) (RW)
18:00 Agaba (arriving at Marka Airport) (RW)
23:25 Agaba (Marka Airport) (RW)
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:10Tehran (RJ)

EXHIBITIONS

Photography exhibition entitled "Leaves of Art" at the premises of the Association of Jordanian Plastic Artists, Jabal Weibdeh, until Sept. 30.
Paintings by Iraqi artist Shmeisani, and a book entitled "The Art of the Fifties" at the Jordanian Plastic Artists' Association, until Sept. 30.
Paintings by Rula Al-Bandak, artist at Al-Bandak Hall, Kan village (Tel. 55311), until Sept.

Accused teenage killer refuses to take psychological examination

By Rana Hussein

AMMAN — A 19-year-old student accused of killing 11 family members and a life-time friend has rejected attempts by his defence lawyer to have him examined by psychiatrists.

Saeed Qashash, who faces 12 counts of premeditated murder, told the court on Thursday that he was mentally sound and innocent.

"I notice that my client suffers from mental and psychological illnesses and therefore I want him to

be examined by a psychiatrist to obtain a final report on his situation," said the defendant's court-appointed attorney, Ali Talafih.

The request generated an angry response from Qashash.

"I refuse being examined by doctors because I am stable and I am not guilty," he said, standing before the three-man tribunal in blue jail fatigues.

The Criminal Court accepted Qashash's argument and overruled the attorney's request during the trial's second session. According to authorities,

Qashash confessed to killing his mother, father, other family members and his school friend, "because they were harassing him about his academic performance and because his family threatened to kick him out if he failed the tawjihi [high school exams] for the second time."

The suspect allegedly lured the victims one after the other to the basement of the family's house, and shot each of them while they had their backs to him, then piled their bodies and sealed the base-

ment's doors and windows with cement and bricks.

Criminal Court prosecutor Majed Azzab objected to the defence attorney's request, stating that "it is obvious that the defendant is mentally stable."

If convicted of the premeditated charges, Qashash could face the death penalty.

The court tribunal, presided over by Judge Mohammad Ajameh and including Judges Mifleh Mubaidin and Issa Hamdan, adjourned the case to Sept. 16 to start hearing the prosecution witnesses.

Srou meets with Duma speaker

MOSCOW (Petra) — The speaker of the Lower House of Parliament, Sa'd Hayel Srou, Friday held talks with the speaker of the Duma on Jordanian-Russian relations, particularly in parliamentary fields.

Srou and his Russian counterpart reiterated their desire to activate and enhance bilateral relations

to better serve their countries' common interests.

The Duma speaker voiced Russia's appreciation of Jordan's role in the meetings of the International Parliamentary Union, currently being held in Moscow.

Srou also met with the head of the Iranian delegation and discussed means of

bolstering bilateral relations and establishing an Islamic parliamentary union.

The Iranian delegation head expressed his country's support for this proposal, adding that a number of Islamic parliaments have already set up a committee to develop a draft statute for such a union.

He pointed out that the committee is due to meet in Tehran later this year to pave the way for practical steps to establish the projected union.

During the IPU meeting on Friday, the agenda was topped by issues related to fighting drugs, the Middle East peace process, and water.

what's going on

13TH ITALIAN FILM WEEK

* Two films entitled "Festival" and "Il grande cocomero" (The Great Pumpkin) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. respectively.

* Il grande cocomero at the Royal Cultural Centre on Sunday Sept. 13 at 5:00 p.m.

DARAT AL FUNUN SUMMER 98 FESTIVAL

"Summer 98" cultural activities at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, to last until Sept. 30, include:

* Film entitled "Jackson Pollock (1912-1956)" on Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

* 50 years of graphic art from Lebanon and works by Jordanian artist Sahel Hiri at the Main House.

* Works by Iraqi artist Samer Usama and by Jordanian artist Said Haddadin at the Blue House.

* Installation works by Jordanian artist Samia Zaru at the Byzantine Church.

* Exhibition of photographs "Memory of a Place" by Jordanian artist Hussein Da'seh at the Museum.

EXHIBITIONS

* Photography exhibition entitled "Les Cite's d'Artistes a Paris" at the premises of the Association of the Jordanian Plastic Artists, Jabal Weibdeh, until Sept. 30.

* Paintings by Iraqi artists Ismail Sheikhly, Suzanne Sheikhly, and Khalid Qassab entitled "Pioneers of the Fifties" at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina, until Sept. 21 (Tel. 5526932).

* Paintings by Rula Shukairy at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Amman, until Sept. 30.

* Exhibition of wrought iron furniture by Jordanian artist Salim Al Bandak at Al Baidar Hall, Kan Zaman village (Tel. 5862531), until Sept. 17.



SHOPPERS' DELIGHT: Shoppers take in the merchandise at an open-air market in Amman (Photo by Youssef Allan)

Feel the need for speed? Drivers recommend go-carts

By Dana Abu Sham

AMMAN — Tired of your entertainment being centred on food consumption? Try a spin in a go-cart, say former rally drivers Bashar and Nasser Bustani.

"In Jordan, there are few amusement facilities, and go-carting could well fill the gap," said Bashar, owner of the newly-renovated and opened Champions track on the premises of the Arabian Horse Club.

Go-carting, a popular motor sport first introduced in California in 1956, involves driving in the smallest possible four-wheeled vehicles. A two-stroke engine and a basic frame made of steel tubing is all that is required. Despite their miniature size, carts can reach speeds of more than 200 kilometres per hour.

In Jordan, the first go-carting track was established by the Bisharat family in 1983. Three months ago, Bashar and Nasser took over and renovated that track at the cost of approxi-

mately JD250,000.

Champions' rental go-carts run at a speed limit of 50 kilometres/hour, while private racing carts can reach speeds of up to 110 kilometres/hour.

"We want to be involved in an enterprise that we love," said Bashar.

At the Champions track, there are 25 rental and 20 private go-carts. The private go-carts run about JD2,500 each, and must be housed at the track.

Riders say the experience is worth it. Some even find that a two-minute drive can change a person's mood. In general, according to Bashar, adults can go for five laps around the one-kilometre track without feeling tired, but children can only take up to three laps.

Each two-minute lap costs JD1.5. Bashar acknowledged that the cost might be high for the average Jordanian, but said the sport was not meant to cater to everyone.

"Frankly speaking, we know the average civil servant may not be able to afford to take his

children there everyday," Bashar said. "But go-carting is low budget in comparison with motor sports in general. In addition, go-carting is the first step for all potential motor racing champions."

Despite the relatively high cost, Bashar said that on week-days the track draws 60-70 visitors who either participate in the sport or simply enjoy a beverage while watching others race. On the weekends, he said, the number exceeds 200.

A new children's track is expected to open within a week, Bashar added, so that "kids between the ages of five and 10 can come and play for as long as they wish with all the safety precautions taken."

Bashar, who was injured in a go-cart accident a month before the track was officially opened, insisted that the sport is safe.

"It was my fault. I used a cart that was twice my size before the track was completely finished. You can call it over-confidence," said Bashar.

"But the track is more than safe."

Government announces strategy of social programme's first phase

By Ghalia Alni

AMMAN — The Planning Ministry has announced the strategy for the first phase of a multi-million dinar social safety net programme aimed at combating poverty and unemployment — the pressing national problems topping the new government's agenda.

"Immediate action to deal with the problems of poverty and unemployment is a challenge for both the government and society," said Planning Minister Nabil Ammani at a seminar aimed at tackling the programme's objectives and strategies for the coming three years. The cost of the first phase of implementation is estimated at JD178 million.

According to the ministry, the programme will ease the impact of economic reforms on Jordan's poor and unemployed through rehabilitating and expanding the National Aid Fund to extend direct financial assistance to the poor and underprivileged.

The programme has also created a community development fund to finance

small- and medium-size income generating projects in a bid to provide economic and investment opportunities for the poor, a ministry report said.

The social safety package entails the improvement of the infrastructure and living conditions in underdeveloped areas in Jordan and the creation of a training and unemployment programme to increase job opportunities for the poor.

The government has said 30 per cent of the population live in either abject or absolute poverty while and 15 per cent of the workforce are unemployed. But independent estimates have put joblessness at around 27 per cent in a country inhabited by 4.2 million people.

During Thursday's seminar, Ammani said the plan, launched earlier this year, has secured about 97 per cent of the financing necessary to implement the first phase. About JD65 million of the cost was secured from the 1998 state budget, JD66.69 million came in loans and JD40.96 million were granted to Jordan from several Arab and foreign institutions.



A poor man searches through a dumpster for cans to supplement his income. The government's social safety net programme seeks to address problem of poverty (Photo by Youssef Allan)

The second phase of the programme will target improving the different sectors that contribute to fight-

ing poverty and unemployment. Such sectors would include health, education and technical training.

Cerebral Palsy Foundation seeks funding to continue services

By Randa Naffa

AMMAN — Acute financial problems at the Cerebral Palsy Foundation are impeding its efforts to help the 11,506 Jordanians suffering from the debilitating muscular disease.

The society, set up in 1977, also said it was finding it difficult to raise funds to help run its six centres scattered across the Kingdom and to effectively try to reduce cerebral palsy through improved programmes.

"The society is finding it hard to raise funds and to fully support our children, as treatment requires a lot of effort, time and money," said CPF President Lina Kattan Abed Rabbo.

In addition to public donations, the foundation relies on the ministries of finance and social development and foreign organisations for annual funding.

The society, which offers free help to cerebral palsy patients, also relies on annual campaigns to raise donations.

"However, these funds are not enough and we barely cover our expenses," Kattan told the Jordan Times in a recent interview. "Therefore, the CPF counts heavily on donations coming from the public."

A growing trend among Jordan's 4.2 million population to donate to the society was recently reversed, apparently because of economic hardships and political uncertainty sweeping the region, said Kattan.

"Over the years, the number of people making donations has risen, indicating growing popular awareness vis-a-vis the issue. But with the economic and political situation facing the country, less people are willing to contribute, which

puts us in a difficult situation," she added.

The foundation has allocated JD150,000 for the upkeep of its centres in Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, Aqaba, Balqa and Karak.

According to recent figures supplied by the CPF, cerebral palsy is diagnosed in an estimated four children per 1,000 births.

"This figure is a little bit high as developing countries have managed to reduce the incidence to two per 1,000 by improving maternal health and paediatrics as well as ensuring adequate treatment for safe pregnancies and deliveries," said Samia Baban, a child-specialist doctor at the foundation.

Officials say the foundation's goal is to reduce the incidence of cerebral palsy in Jordan to one per 1,000 births.

Baban said early detection and treatment can help prevent disabilities from developing severely.

A proper programme starts with a thorough infantile medical examination capable of detecting signs of developmental retardation, followed by brain scans, various other tests and finally by rehabilitation services which might include physiotherapy, supportive therapy and the provision of aid and equipment, the doctor said.

Kattan said the society, in coordination with the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development and the Health Ministry, has launched a new project to help poor cerebral palsy patients and offer consultancy services in underprivileged villages.

Under the scheme, the CPF is allowed to use premises of other development organisations and to conduct visits to rehabilitation centres to help treat patients living in remote areas.

"The CPF believes that its services should be expanded to children in isolated settlements whose families find it difficult to reach us and who lack the money to buy the necessary equipment," said Kattan.

In 1992, the foundation established a pilot kindergarten that grew into an elementary school now teaching 42 students to help prepare them to cope in ordinary schools, she added.

A shop set up by the CPF in 1983 is manufacturing wheelchairs, exercise pillows, braces, stands, trays and other equipment that facilitate the day-to-day needs and activities of these children, Kattan said.

According to Baban, the society also offers counselling sessions to train mothers of children with cerebral palsy on ways to help ease the discomfort of their disabilities and to train them how to help themselves.

Several children who were helped by the society have passed the tawjihi (state-run high school exams).

Kattan said four of the society's students graduated from the University of Jordan this year "and have grown up to be distinguished citizens."

Charles Masharfeh, 17, a cerebral palsy sufferer, said his condition improved since he came to the foundation three years ago. "I am attending ninth grade. I read books and use the computer and Internet," he said.

Jamal Ahmad, three, regularly visits the foundation centre in Amman and "has shown promising results and achieved a good amount of independence," said his mother.

"Our aim is to teach the children and prepare them to manage confidently in life," said Kattan.

Water Authority announces telephone numbers for comments, enquiries

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Water Authority has published in the local press telephone numbers at which the public can contact the authority and report interruptions in service and other complaints.

The announcement said the public can reach the authority's offices to complain about not receiving water supplies, enquire about water distribution programmes or report broken pipes.

Citizens living in western Amman districts can reach the authority at the following numbers: 5411130 or 5412130.

However, several callers who tried to contact the offices found that the two lines were either continually busy or were not being answered. They told the Jordan Times that after receiving an answer, they were directed to call number 4897468, which also was not being answered.

The announcement said the public in southern Amman districts can reach the authority's offices at the following numbers: 4167230 or 4164023.

But these two lines seemed busy as well and no callers were able to get through.

In its announcement, the Water Authority gave telephone numbers for other districts.

Mystery of bomber's end may never be solved

(Continued from page 1)

target in its hunt for the killers of Ismail in suicide attacks.

Sharif had died not from the blast but from four bullets pumped into his chest and a foot several hours before the explosion either at the site or elsewhere.

Hamas, as expected, immediately blamed Israel, as expected, swiftly denied it.

What had not been expected was that the Palestinian National Authority would say Hamas pulled the trigger.

It declared that Sharif had been shot dead in a row over tactics and money in Hamas' Izz El Deen El Qassam military wing and that the blast was staged to try to cover the traces.

It pointed the finger first at Adel Awadallah, then at Imad, who was arrested by Palestinian police on April 11 only to escape from a jail in Jericho on Aug. 15.

"All the confessions we have say Imad was the last person to see Muhyideen and that Imad is able to solve the puzzle," Rajoub said last week.

Imad Awadallah, in a letter faxed to news agencies last week, denied any part in Sharif's killing.

He said his jailers had tried in vain to torture him into a variety of confessions including that Sharif had paid the price for "immoral" activities — a coy reference to recent whispers from Palestinian security sources of a sexual motive.

The Awadallah family alleged on Friday that Rajoub had allowed Imad to escape in the expectation that he would link up with Adel, who in April accused the security chief of complicity with Israel in Sharif's killing.

"This was in full coordination between the Palestinians and Israelis," the family said in a statement which alleged the brothers had been kept under Palestinian surveillance until the Israelis killed them.

Israel says its troops came across the brothers by chance during a search of an area near the West Bank town of Hebron when they went to check out gunshots and an explosion.

Hamas has previously accused Rajoub of collusion with Israel in the killing of Sharif, allegations which Rajoub denies.

The passions aroused over the affair brought the Palestinian National Authority and Hamas, Arafat's main domestic opposition, to the brink of open conflict in April.

What deepens the abiding mystery, however, are the gaps and inconsistencies in both parties' versions of events.

Despite initial fiery threats of bloody retaliation against Israel, Hamas has not avenged Sharif's killing as it did with deadly effect in response to the assassination in 1996 of its then chief bomb maker, Yahya Ayyash.

Nor has the movement kept an early promise to make public the findings of its own investigation into the Sharif affair.

Equally, the PNA has failed to release its evidence or charge and bring to trial any of the suspects it has held since Sharif was killed.

Even the autopsy carried out on Sharif

remains under wraps.

Palestinian sources familiar with the findings, however, have told Reuters the body, which was scorched but not blown apart by the blast, showed no signs of torture or a struggle and that Sharif had eaten a hearty meal shortly before he died.

Other Palestinian sources say Sharif had rented the workshop where his corpse was found under the assumed name of Nadim Abu Sneh. The site is about 200 metres from where Imad Awadallah was living at the time, the sources say.

None of that explains, however, why Sharif lay dead and naked on the floor of the workshop with his legs propped up against the side of the car when the explosion took place.

Nor is the site itself likely to yield any forensic clues to who killed him or why. Witnesses at the scene on the night of the blast say police brought in a bulldozer within a matter of hours to demolish what was left of the building.

First of 400 paramilitary prisoners in N. Ireland given early release

BELFAST (AFP) — Seven paramilitary prisoners were given early release in Northern Ireland Friday, the first of more than 400 let out before the end of their sentences as part of the ongoing peace process.

Three pro-United Ireland republicans and three pro-British rule loyalists were freed from the Maze prison near Belfast. A seventh inmate was also due for release from Magilligan prison near Londonderry.

The seven are the first prisoners released in Northern Ireland under the historic April 10 peace agreement.

Dublin freed six Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoners on Aug. 1.

The early release of paramilitaries whose organisations are deemed to be on a permanent ceasefire was a key element of the peace deal. Over the next two years some 400 prisoners will be freed as long as the groups do not return to violence.

The releases cover the main paramilitary groups on both sides of the province's sectarian

divide, including the IRA, which suspended attacks in July 1997, and the two main Protestant loyalist groups, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). There remain a number of others — the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF), Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), the Continuity IRA (CIRA) and Real IRA — which are considered opposed to the peace process and not included.

The three IRA men being freed Friday were: Sean McGuigan, serving 12 years for grievous bodily harm; Louis McNally, given 22 years for conspiracy to murder; and Gerard Magee, given 20 years, also for conspiracy to murder.

The UDA men were: Matthew McCormack, serving 14 years for conspiracy to murder; Gary Hall, who received a 14-year term for attempted murder; and Daniel Annesley, serving five years for blackmail.

The seventh inmate was not identified. Waiting outside the Maze to

greet the IRA was former bomber Gerry Kelly, now a Northern Ireland assembly member for the IRA's political wing Sinn Féin.

Kelly, who escaped from the Maze in 1983, said the releases were part of the momentum of the peace process, adding: "We need momentum to keep it moving."

"There are over 100 republican prisoners and possibly the same number of loyalists who should have immediate release, and that is not being reflected in the releases today."

The loyalists were met by supporters and ferried away without a word.

But for the republicans, Magee, speaking in Gaelic, told waiting reporters: "It's excellent to be out. It's a historic day."

The April peace deal was approved by a huge majority in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in a joint referendum.

Early paramilitary releases remain one of its most controversial sections, particularly among pro-British rule union-



Irish republican prisoner Gerry Magee gives the thumbs up Friday as he faces the media gathered outside the Maze prison following his release. The early release of six loyalist and republican prisoners came as part of the province's peace deal, the Good Friday Agreement (Reuters photo)

ists and the opposition British Conservatives, who argue they should be held up until paramilitaries begin disarming.

Plans have also been mooted for the ex-prisoners to meet their victims under a scheme aimed at healing divisions.

In August it was disclosed that both Protestant and Roman Catholic relatives of victims have been asked to sit down with freed paramilitaries. A group called Victims of Trauma is working with the republican

pressure group Saoirse to bring the two sides together.

"If the victims can sit down and talk with us it might help both sides to see the suffering we have in common," said Martin Meehan of Saoirse, who served more than 20 years for terrorist offences.

Under the peace deal both paramilitary releases and disarmament should be completed within two years, although they are not conditional on each other. A total of 446 prisoners

have applied to be released, according to the committee overseeing the project. Some 38 have been turned down because they failed to meet the criteria or wrongly filled out their applications.

The committee announced at the end of August that 200 prisoners would be freed by the end of October and the remainder by Christmas.

That would leave some 50 paramilitary prisoners in Northern Irish jails.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Conditional support for Zimbabwe reforms

HARARE (AFP) — International donors pledged support for race-based land reforms in Zimbabwe Friday, but most stopped short of committing specific funds until the government revises its programme. It became clear on the final day of a conference called to raise cash for a \$1.6 billion scheme to redistribute millions of hectares of white-owned land to blacks that the government will have to compromise. More than 40 donor nations and organisations, ranging from former colonial power Britain to the World Bank, attended the three-day conference and most stressed the need for "fairness" and "transparency" in land reform. Diplomats attending the conference say these words are a polite form of insisting that the reforms are free of the corruption which plagued earlier attempts and saw land going to government officials rather than the poor. Giving an overview of the consultations at the start of Friday's session, Local Government Minister John Nkomo said it had been stressed that the reforms should focus on poverty eradication. They should also be aimed at reducing congestion in the communal areas, and special attention should be given to women and disadvantaged groups such as farm workers.

Extradition of apartheid-era cops possible

PRETORIA (AFP) — South Africa would consider requests for the extradition of apartheid-era security agents who committed offences abroad, Justice Minister Dullah Omar has said, according to Friday's press. The question of extraditions arose at the amnesty hearing of former police chief Johan Coetzee, who admitted this week that he and others were responsible for the 1982 bombing of the London offices of the African National Congress (ANC). Coetzee and seven other apartheid-era policemen are before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Pretoria to ask for amnesty for the bombing and for other incidents, including the murder of anti-apartheid activist Ruth First in Mozambique. Omar told the Citizen newspaper: "The reality is that South Africa can grant amnesty for crimes committed in South Africa but has no legal power or might to grant amnesty in connection with crimes committed in other jurisdictions." Omar said: "I cannot say in advance that we will, or will not, extradite people. We are required to consider all applications on their merits." Legal experts at the hearing questioned whether South Africa had a moral obligation to protect people disclosing their involvement in incidents, on granting of amnesty, from possible prosecution in a foreign country.

DRC troops, allies strike at rebels

KINSHASA (AFP) — DRC government troops and their allies have attacked Kalemie, a stronghold town for mainly Tutsi rebels in the north of mineral-rich Katanga province, independent sources said here Friday. The Congolese Armed Forces (FAC) of President Laurent Kabila and their allies have based their field headquarters at Kindu, under 150 kilometres from the rebel forward lines, authoritative DRC sources confirmed. "Thursday, there was heavy fighting around Kalemie," which lies on Lake Tanganyika, about 1,500 kilometres east of Kinshasa, one independent source here said. Kindu, the capital of Maniema province, is a key town with an airport located a little over 300 kilometres from the headquarters of the rebels and their political wing at Goma, north of Lake Kivu on the Rwandan border. A Congolese source also said that the general offensive against the rebels "has not yet begun," since Kabila's Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) government and its allies were awaiting the outcome of multinational ceasefire implementation talks in Addis Ababa.

Italian P2 fugitive Gelli in suicide bid

NICE (AFP) — Licio Gelli, fugitive founder of Italy's disbanded P2 Masonic lodge, attempted to commit suicide Friday following his arrest on the French Riviera but is out of danger, police said. Gelli, 79, made an attempt on his life in a Nice hospital where he was admitted Thursday after suffering heart trouble following his arrest the same day. The fugitive financier broke his glasses and tried to cut his veins but was quickly overpowered by police and suffered only light cuts. He was transferred to an emergency unit in another hospital that has penitentiary wards. The former P2 (Propaganda Due) Grand Master had been on the run since May, when he absconded while under house arrest at his villa in Tuscany. His disappearance followed a ruling by Italy's highest court upholding his conviction for complicity in the 1982 fraudulent bankruptcy of the Banco Ambrosiano and sentencing him to some 12 years in prison. Two international warrants for his arrest have been issued. He is expected to be extradited.

Germany bans far-right party rally

BERLIN (R) — The eastern German port city of Rostock has banned a pre-election rally by the far-right National Democratic Party (NPD), fearing violence among the 5,000 supporters expected to turn up. City authorities announced late Thursday they had banned the march planned for Sept. 19. It had been due to go through the district of Lichtenhagen, scene of some of Germany's worst anti-foreigner riots in 1992. German internal security keeps a watchful eye on the NPD, which is believed to have many neo-Nazis and violent skinheads among its members. The NPD said it would appeal against the decision. The party has made the eastern province of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, where Rostock is one of the main cities, the focus of its campaign in the general election on Sept. 27, when a state vote here is also scheduled to take place. The Rostock rally was to be the NPD's main event before voters go to the polls.

Northwest, pilots reach tentative accord to end strike

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A crippling 13-day strike by Northwest Airlines pilots over pay and job security Friday was close to ending after management and union leaders crafted a tentative deal first announced by President Bill Clinton.

Clinton Thursday said the fourth largest U.S. carrier and the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), which represents Northwest's 6,000 striking pilots, had reached "terms that form the basis of an agreement."

"The agreement of course will have to be approved [by the pilots], but I think the strike is over," he added.

Speaking on the White House lawn, with his wife Hillary and Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater at his side, the president gave no

details of the deal but said the parties "are now working on a specific time of getting back to work."

Shortly after Clinton's announcement, ALPA spokesman Paul Ormrod confirmed the tentative agreement in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where both sides have been negotiating behind closed doors since Tuesday.

Ormrod said, however, that strike would remain in effect pending a review of the proposed settlement by the governing body of the local Northwest pilots union Saturday.

If approved by the union executive, the deal will then have to be ratified by the union's rank and file, Ormrod added.

In a statement issued late Thursday, Slater applauded

both sides in the labour dispute, saying the tentative agreement was "good news for all Americans" and proof that "the collective bargaining process can work well when both sides are committed to resolving their differences."

The strike has had a crippling effect on the economies of several upper Midwest states, where Northwest has a commanding presence.

It has also severely disrupted trans-Pacific air traffic as the Minneapolis-based company is the leading U.S. carrier serving Asia.

Northwest has cancelled all its domestic flights until Sunday and its international flights from Asia and Europe until Monday.

The pilots launched their walkout Aug. 28 after contract talks broke down over pay, job

security issues, work rules and a planned alliance with Continental Airlines.

The pilots had been pressing for a 15 per cent pay raise over five years, dating from 1996 when the prior contract ran out while Northwest had offered nine per cent over four years.

After inconclusive exploratory talks in Chicago over the weekend, the two sides resumed the bargaining here Tuesday under a news blackout imposed by National Mediation Board chairwoman Maggie Jacobson.

Clinton had resisted calls for him to use his federal authority to impose a 60-day cooling period as he did last year during a strike at American Airlines. But he directed Slater and White House deputy counsel Bruce Lindsey to monitor the Minneapolis negotiations.

Teenage sailor kills eight on Russian sub

MOSCOW (R) — A teenage conscript sailor killed eight crewmates aboard a Russian nuclear-powered submarine docked near Murmansk Friday, officials said.

Twelve hours after a shooting spree in the early hours of the morning, Alexander Kuzminykh was still barricaded inside a compartment of the Akula-class hunter-killer sub and threatening to blow up the vessel, Russian media said.

ITAR-TASS quoted local government officials as saying an anti-terrorist commando unit was preparing to seize him. Giving figures that conflicted with the Defence Ministry, it said the sailor had killed two more hostages, raising the toll to nine.

Interfax news agency said the sailor's parents were flying from their home in St. Petersburg to speak with their son.

The ministry, in a terse statement confirming the latest in a countless series of similar incidents in Russia's underfunded armed forces, denied there were any nuclear weapons aboard and said there was no danger to the vessel itself.

"An emergency occurred on a submarine of the Northern Fleet involving the death of personnel," it said. Admiral Vladimir Kuroyodov, the head of the navy, had flown to the scene.

A Russian television reporter near the Skalisty base said Kuzminykh, 19 and from a military family in St. Petersburg, had killed a sentry guarding the vessel's gangplank in the middle of the night. She said he stabbed the

guard with a chisel.

TASS said he bludgeoned him to death with a sledgehammer.

Russian television said Kuzminykh had also badly wounded an officer from a submarine moored alongside and then, taking the sentry's assault rifle, had gone below decks on his own vessel.

He shot dead five other conscripts and took a further two hostage before later killing them, the television said.

Around midday (0800 GMT), the teenager asked not to be disturbed as he wanted to sleep. He also made his threat to blow up the submarine, although it was not clear if he had access to explosives. The vessel had, however, been preparing to put to sea, suggesting it might have already been armed.

Similar incidents of havoc have become commonplace in the Russian armed forces since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of Communist rule deprived them of much state funding.

Past shootings have been provoked by conscripts' anger at poor conditions or at endemic bullying by other servicemen.

One Western defence expert in Moscow played down the significance of the latest incident for the security of Russia's extensive military arsenal. Even if a conscript had access to nuclear weapons, only senior officers had control of them.

"The Americans have had similar incidents. The potential is always there. It does not present a particular threat," he said.

Volkswagen launches slave labour compensation fund

BONN (R) — Volkswagen AG, the German carmaker founded under Hitler's Nazi regime, said Friday it was launching a DM20 million (\$12 million) private humanitarian fund to compensate its World War II slave labourers.

"The company has decided, effective immediately, to create a Private Relief Fund...the Fund will be adequately financed and have a budget of 20 million marks," VW spokesman Klaus Kocks said in a statement released after a supervisory board meeting.

Kocks said that VW had not been legally obliged to provide restitution, because Germany had already paid extensive post-war reparations. But he said the fund was a gesture in recognition of the company's shared moral responsibility.

Volkswagen had already earmarked more than DM25 million separately for "humanitarian projects in the homelands of former forced labourers but also for historical, social and educational projects," he added.

"We want to continue along the path we have chosen by providing assistance for former forced labourers, who during World War II were compelled to work at the Volkswagen company of that era and to make a contribution to their way of life at the advanced ages they have reached," Kocks said.

Historians say VW, founded in 1938 to build the "Volkswagen" or People's Car, bought the labour of about 7,000 slaves from Hitler's SS security service between 1941 and 1945. Their work included building mines, V1 rockets and anti-tank launchers.

Friends call for German ex-guerrilla to be freed

PARIS (R) — Prominent friends of German former guerrilla Hans-Joachim Klein, who was reunited in France this week, said he had intended to give himself up to German authorities within days and they called for his early release.

In a letter published by the daily Le Monde Friday, the group of six friends and supporters recalled that Klein had been condemned to death and had broken with guerrilla mastermind Carlos the Jackal two decades ago.

"[Klein] was detained a few days before he was to surrender willingly to German justice... We had finally convinced him to put his affairs in order with the law," they said.

"We ask in the name of justice that his attitude be taken into account and that he be reunited with his two French children as soon as possible," they said.

Klein, who is wanted for murder and kidnapping in Germany and Austria, is being held in France pending likely extradition requests. He is best known for taking part in Carlos' most spectacular coup — the 1975 kidnapping of OPEC oil ministers in Vienna in which three people were killed.

The group, including German Euro-MP Daniel Cohn-Bendit, French philosopher Andre Glucksmann and prizewinning writer Olivier

Rolin, said they had helped Klein for years, paying his rent and protecting him from his former comrades' death threats. "Not only did Klein renounce violent struggle. He denounced its errors and perversions... He helped drive many young people, particularly Germans, away from it," they said.

Klein's Frankfurt-based attorney has said his client had agreed to give himself up in March and suggested the timing of his arrest in northwest France, less than three weeks before Germany's general election, was pure electioneering as the ruling Christian Democrats trail their Social Democratic rivals.

Bosnian leaders abandon moderation ahead of elections

SARAJEVO (R) — In their final pronouncements before this weekend's Bosnian elections, leaders of the country's three ethnic groups issued tough statements backing their own communities, dashing Western hopes of a spirit of reconciliation.

Carlos Westendorp, the Spanish diplomat overseeing the peace process in Bosnia, said this week he was confident that moderates would gain in the two-day presidential and parliamentary elections.

Robert Barry, the international official supervising the elections, backed his view, saying he believed that Bosnian voters would send their politicians the message "that they are tired of all this nationalist posturing." But Croat, Muslim and Serb leaders — even those who accept the Dayton Accords that ended the 1992-95 war — made clear that their main concern was still to defend their

sectional interests.

Ante Jelavic of the dominant Bosnian Croat party HDZ, main challenger for the Croat seat on the three-man co-presidency, in an interview in the Sarajevo daily Oslobođenje Thursday, vowed: "We will be strong in protecting the rights of all citizens — and especially the protection of Croat interests."

Referring to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is supervising the elections and which has already banned 15 HDZ candidates for unfair electoral tactics, he said: "Despite the OSCE measures we will ensure our victory... which will mean an honourable and civilised future for Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina."

For the Bosnian Serbs, Momcilo Krajisnik, a hardliner who holds the Serb seat on the presidency, drew rapturous applause from a crowd of 30,000 Thursday night at a rally

in Banja Luka, the Bosnian Serb capital, when he called it "the most Serbian town in the whole Serb ethnic area."

"We call for Serb unity, but not a false unity with other people against the Serbs," he said, using the Serbian word for unity — "sloga" — which is the name of the coalition challenging the SDS party.

Western envoys are reluctant to deal with Krajisnik, believing he does not accept the Dayton Accords which set up a Croat-Muslim federation and a Serb republic within Bosnia's national boundaries, and still dreams of Serbian separatism.

"People say I am anti-Dayton while [the other ethnic leaders] are for it. But they are working for a multi-ethnic Bosnia and I want the Republika Srpska (RS) to survive. We don't want the spirit of Dayton. We want the letter of Dayton. Dayton gave us a state and we are not giving it away," said Krajisnik.



FLOODS IN MEXICO: People look at a bridge in Tonala, Chiapas destroyed by the Zanateco River. Widespread flooding in Chiapas has killed 48 people and left more than 50,000 homeless (AFP photo)

World
Hanoi rules
out talks in
islands spa
with China

NEWS I

Agency sends aid

ME APP — The United Nations

has agreed to provide humanitarian

aid to the people of the

Democratic Republic of the

Congo (DRC) who have been

affected by the conflict.

The aid will be provided in the

form of food, medicine and

other essential supplies.

The aid will be distributed

through the United Nations

Humanitarian Assistance

Coordinating Committee.

The aid will be provided for

a period of six months.

The aid will be provided

in the amount of \$10 million.

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pledged support for day, but most stopped government revise its day of a conference me to redistribute mil-lacks that the govern-40 donor nations and al power Britain to the ence and most stressed ney" in land reformse words are a polle of the corruption whicg to government whicw of the consultanment Minister John forms should focus on aimed at reducing coral attention should be s such as farm workers.

cops possible

ld consider requests for agents who committed Omar has said, accordstraditions arise at the f Johan Coetzee, whoe responsible for the of the African National er apartheid-era police Commission (TRC), abing and for other in-aid activist Ruth First in-wspaper: "The reality is or crimes continued in ight to grant amnesty in ther jurisdictions." Omar vill, or will not, extradi-applications on where mar-ed whether South Africa: disclosing their involv-ety, from possible priv-

rebels

ent troops and their allies vn for mainly Tutsi rebels a province, independe e Armed Forces (FAC) of ies have based their field metres from the rebel for-s confirmed. "Thursday, mie," which lies on Lake-ty of Kinshasa, one inde-the capital of Matienia it located a little over 30 ie rebels and their politi- in the Rwandan border A neral offensive against the dia's Democratic Republi- lies were awaiting the out-ementation talks in Add-

suicide bid

boundary of Italy's disbanded it suicide Friday following out of danger police, said in a Nice hospital where he g heart trouble following his nder broke his glasses and overpowered by police and ferred to an emergency unit ary wards. The former P2 been on the run since May, ouse arrest at his villa in d a ruling by Italy's highest mplicity in the 1982 fraudu-iano and sentencing him to tional warrants for his arrest e extradited.

party rally

an port city of Rostock has a-right National Democra- mong the 5,000 supporters s announced late Thursday for Sept. 19. It had been the enghen, scene of some of is in 1992. German intern- e NPD, which is believed to be the focus of its campaign in the 1 state vote here is also sched-ly was to be the NPD's main

World News

Hanoi rules out talks in islands spat with China

HANOI (R) — Vietnam Friday ruled out the possibility of talks with China over accusations made by Beijing that Vietnamese soldiers seized part of a disputed chain of reefs in the South China Sea.

"We think China's reaction is groundless because this is normal civil activity carried out on Vietnam's continental shelf," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Phan Thuy Thanh said in a statement obtained by Reuters.

"That's why this is not an issue to be negotiated."

Thursday China demanded that Vietnam immediately withdraw soldiers from part of what it called the Spratly islands in a growing war of words this week between Beijing and Hanoi.

Thanh's statement on Friday did not refer to any particular area in the South China Sea.

But in a similar comment Wednesday she referred to the Ba Ke islands, which appear to be the focus of Beijing's attention. She said the islands lay on Vietnam's continental shelf and people there were civilians.

In Friday's statement Thanh also repeated Vietnam's position that it has full legal and historical grounds to sovereignty over the Spratlys and another archipelago in the South China Sea, the Paracels. China has occupied the Paracels since 1974.



EXPLOSION IN SOUTH KOREA: A South Korean firefighter Friday walks among wrecked cars after a liquefied petroleum gas filling station exploded in Puchon. More than 20 people were injured in the explosion, with three in critical condition (Reuters photo)

Chinese dissidents hope to launch party; Robinson holds Tibet talks

BEIJING (AFP) — U.N. human rights chief Mary Robinson discussed torture, arbitrary detention and religious tolerance in Tibet Friday as dissidents in central China held out hopes for a weakening of the Communist Party's hard line on dissent.

"Mary Robinson brought up a list of issues and recommendations including some concerns regarding Tibet," her spokesman Jose Diaz said by telephone from Lhasa.

Concerns on Tibet included those voiced by the United Nations' special rapporteurs on torture and religious intolerance and the working group on arbitrary detention, he said.

Robinson is on a 10-day trip to China, the first by a United Nations human rights commissioner, which is aimed at strengthening dialogue between China and U.N. bodies on human rights.

During her two-day visit to the sensitive Tibetan region — where overseas critics accuse China of widespread human

rights abuses — she met with local government leaders, and ethnic and religious affairs, cultural, planning and education officials.

Although China claims its sovereignty over Tibet dates back to the 13th century, its troops did not march into the region until 1951 and Robinson's visit there is the first aimed at opening human rights dialogue on issues ranging from the rights to education and food to the rights to freedom of expression and religion.

Robinson's visit came as hopes were running high among dissidents in central China that the Communist government appeared to be softening its hard line on dissent by preparing to approve the first political opposition party since it came to power in 1949. Activists from eastern Shandong and central Hubei provinces told AFP officials in both provinces had accepted opposition party applications for consideration and had

asked for four simple conditions to be fulfilled.

"Three activists went to Hubei Province Civil Affairs bureau this morning and officials told them that they had to fulfil four conditions to register a provincial branch of the China Democracy Party [CDP]," veteran dissident Qin Yongmin said by telephone from Wuhan.

The four conditions were that the party had a capitalisation of 50,000 yuan (\$6,000), that details of its headquarters and main organisers were provided, and that there were at least 50 named members.

"We have thought about the possibility that the government is luring us into a trap but we are not afraid. We will fulfil the four conditions and see what happens," Qin said. "We don't want to move too fast and put too much pressure on the government," he added.

Officials in Shandong province gave the same four conditions to dissidents Xie Wanjun and Liu Lianjun

Thursday when they tried to register the Shandong branch of the party. Over the summer, dissidents in neighbouring Zhejiang province made the first attempt to register the party, but that application led to several detentions.

Robinson's Tibet tour also included a visit to the historic Potala Palace, Jokhang monastery and a primary school.

Sources said she would not be visiting a prison or holding any unscheduled meetings for fear of reprisals after her departure from the Himalayan region.

Overseas watchdog groups reported that prison authorities reallocated violently against prisoners who spoke to members of the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which visited Lhasa's Drapchi prison last year. Robinson leaves Tibet for Shanghai Saturday morning and then returns to Beijing to meet Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

Sri Lanka bombing kills town mayor, 11 others

COLOMBO (AFP) — Tamil Tiger rebels bombed a local council meeting in Sri Lanka's northern town of Jaffna Friday, killing the mayor and the region's top army officer together with 10 others, the defence ministry said.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) carried out the morning attack against the meeting which was attended by Mayor P. Sivapalan and army and police officers, the defence ministry said in a statement.

"Initial investigations confirm that LTTE is responsible for this explosion," the statement said. It said Jaffna's top army officer, brigadier Susantha Mendis, was killed together with six army and

police officers.

Four civilians working for the Jaffna municipality and the region's rehabilitation authority were killed together with Sivapalan who took over the hot seat following the May assassination of the previous mayor Sarojini Yogeswaran.

Sivapalan who was critically injured died on admission to the Jaffna hospital, the ministry said adding several other civilians had been injured.

The blast ripped through the council meeting, the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) which controls the local body said.

"We are told that more than half a dozen security personnel and office staff have been either killed or wounded," the

TULF spokesman here said adding they had reports two foreigners had also been wounded.

Their nationalities were not immediately known, but a spokesman for the International Red Cross which has several foreign aid workers in the region said none of their staff was hurt in the attack.

The circumstances of the latest attack in Jaffna, 400 kilometres north of here, were not immediately clear but military officials here speculated about the possibility of it being a suicide attack.

The first woman mayor of the war-torn northern town, Sarojini Yogeswaran, 60, elected in landmark polls in

January, was assassinated in May in an attack blamed on the LTTE.

There was no immediate reaction from the LTTE to Friday's attack in Jaffna, their former stronghold which the security forces captured in December 1995.

The LTTE, which is fighting a drawn-out war for independence, had opposed the January council elections on the Jaffna peninsula, the region's first in 15 years.

More than 55,000 people have since been killed in the LTTE-led campaign to establish an independent Tamil homeland in Sri Lanka's northeast. The government wrested control of Jaffna from the LTTE in December 1995.

NEWS IN BRIEF

U.N. agency sends aid to Bangladesh

ROME (AFP) — The United Nations food agency announced Friday a large aid operation for the 20 million Bangladeshis who face death if unprecedented floods there do not subside within the next three weeks. An estimated \$76 million worth of food will be provided and distributed by the World Food Programme (WFP), said an agency statement issued in Rome. In coming to the aid of up to 20 million people, the operation marks the largest-scale package yet mounted by the WFP. This will include 352,400 tonnes of wheat, 3,500 varied products and 175 tonnes of dry biscuits for immediate distribution. The flooding has prevented many of the millions from planting their yearly rice crops, due to be harvested in January. The WFP estimates that food aid will be needed until at least this time. United Nations experts in the Bangladesh capital Dhaka warned that if the floods continue to rise over the next three weeks, around 20 million people face death by disease, drowning or starvation.

China extends logging ban

BEIJING (AFP) — China has extended a logging ban to the southwestern province of Yunnan in the wake of catastrophic flooding along its major rivers, official media said Friday. "Logging of natural forests around the Jinsha river, a tributary of the Yangtze in Yunnan province, will be illegal as of Oct. 1," Xinhua news agency said. China has already ordered the closure of timber trading along other Yangtze tributaries in the southwestern province of Sichuan. Yunnan authorities would adopt measures to protect forests covering 7.49 million hectares and plant trees on a further four million hectares, the agency said. "The fact that over 260 million tonnes of soil and sand which flow from the valley in to the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River on an annual basis has at least in part been blamed for heavy flooding," it said. Heavy deforestation, leading to soil erosion and silting of riversbeds, has prompted a sharp acceleration of long-term plans to phase out logging of ancient forests in the wake of the worst flooding to hit the Yangtze basin since 1954. Disastrous flooding across China this summer left 3,000 dead, millions homeless, 21 million hectares of farmland flooded and economic losses of \$20 billion.

India to recruit ex-guerrillas

GUWAHATI (R) — India plans to recruit former separatist guerrillas into its security forces, including the army, to provide them with employment. Home (interior) Ministry Additional Secretary P.D. Shenoy said late Thursday in Guwahati, the main city in India's rebel-infested northeast, that the government would soon unveil a package for militants who had given up armed rebellion. The northeast — made up of seven hilly states which are surrounded by China, Bhutan and Bangladesh and home to more than 200 ethnic groups — has been wracked by separatist violence since India won independence half a century ago. A regional military spokesman said "the process of rehabilitation of ULFA cadres who have come overground has commenced." Formed in 1979, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) is fighting for secession in Assam.

Philippine students protest at U.S. Embassy

MANILA (AP) — Police using tear gas and batons scuffled outside the American embassy in Manila Friday with about 30 leftist students protesting a military agreement with the United States. Police dragged one of the protesters inside a waiting area at the seaside embassy, which has been under tight security since the bombings last month of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Nairobi. The members of the League of Filipino Students were protesting the Visiting Forces Agreement between the Manila and Washington, which would allow a resumption of large-scale joint military exercises in the Philippines. The agreement, which was signed earlier this year by senior officials but still requires the approval of the Philippine Senate, would provide certain legal protections to U.S. soldiers while on duty in the Philippines. Critics say the pact would limit the Philippine government's right to prosecute American soldiers who commit crimes in the country, and would also promote prostitution and drag the Philippines into conflicts between the United States and its enemies.

Japan backs N. Korea's reactor project despite suspending support

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan said Friday it had no wish to jeopardise an international nuclear reactor project for North Korea although it has frozen support in retaliation for a rocket launch by Pyongyang.

"The framework of KEDO [the Korean Peninsula Nuclear Development Organisation] is the only realistic and effective means to make North Korea give up nuclear development," said Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura.

"We should not break the framework," he told a news conference. "We want to hold talks with the United States and South Korea before deciding on our future stance."

Under a 1994 agreement between the United States and North Korea, KEDO is to provide two light-water reactors to the North in exchange for Pyongyang freezing its suspect nuclear development programme.

Japan, a major contributor to the project, suspended cooperation on Aug. 31 when North Korea fired a suspected ballistic missile which overflew its territory. Pyongyang claims the launch was for a satellite.

Komura's remarks followed a tentative agreement reached between Washington and Pyongyang during high-level talks, calling for the start of the reactor construction project in November.

KEDO has set total construction costs of more than \$4.6 billion. South Korea is expected to take over 70 per cent of the expected cost with Japan paying about \$1 billion.

Tokyo has since been under pressure from Seoul and Washington to reconsider and sign by November to ensure a halt to the North Korean

nuclear programme, which produces plutonium capable of use in nuclear weapons.

Tokyo has also suspended food aid and normalisation efforts with Pyongyang and halted all bilateral charter flights.

Thursday, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi said Japan would consider modifying the North Korea sanctions.

"We will consider the possibility that we can change or modify measures against North Korea," Obuchi told reporters.

In another thawing move towards reconciliation with Pyongyang, Japanese foreign ministry officials showed a cautious stance over earlier threats of banning Korean residents here transferring cash to North Korea.

"We need international agreement such as a UN resolution" if Tokyo wants to suspend currency transfers from Japan to a third country, Sadakazu Tanigaki, vice finance minister, told a meeting with senior officials of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

"In principle, Japan needs to follow such agreement if it wants to do so. We had better be cautious about solely introducing measures to suspend cash transactions," Tanigaki said.

The LDP said this week it was mulling banning North Korean residents' cash transfers to their country, a major source of hard currency for the Stalinist state, to protest the suspected missile test.

There are nearly 700,000 North and South Korean residents in Japan. Private cash transfers from Japan to North Korea are estimated at up to \$1 billion a year.

Cambodian king, army warn opposition amid more violence

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia's powerful king and army Friday warned opposition leaders to avoid constitutional crisis by honouring the July 26 election results or face severe consequences amid more street violence.

One man was shot dead and another wounded in the capital as swelling mobs of pro-government demonstrators — some armed with pistols, clubs and stones — took to the city streets on day five of political violence.

An army statement said the military "has the duty to protect the result of the election," calling the poll — won by ruling strongman Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) — "the will of the entire Cambodian people."

"The armed forces will implement their duty to protect the constitution and the supreme interest of our country and people," a statement from the office of the chiefs of army staff warned.

The statement condemned "criminal activities" by the two main opposition groups, Prince Norodom Ranariddh's FUNCINPEC and Sam Rainsy's party, adding the elections were "free, fair and credible" as reported by international monitors.

An open letter from revered monarch King Norodom Sihanouk also warned his son Prince Ranariddh and Sam Rainsy to avoid a constitution-

al crisis.

"If members of the two parties... do not participate in the convening of the National Assembly on Sept. 24, then the Royal government will not recognise them as fully legal MPs," the letter warned.

Further pressure was directed at opposition demonstrators when they were confronted by up to 1,000 armed pro-CPP protesters hurling stones and giving chase.

U.N. officials here said a man was shot dead and another injured in the morning's violence. Human rights workers said the man was gunned down by a pro-Hun Sen activist, while sporadic incidents of beatings and shooting continued throughout the day.

"Maybe more ambulances will be needed," said chief government spokesman Khieu Kanarath. "If we arrest the demonstrators we are criticised so we have withdrawn the police. If they attack each other we don't care."

A U.N. Human Rights Commission statement slammed the vigilante mobs, dubbing them "agents provocateurs" and calling on authorities to disarm and disband the groups.

Thursday a small anti-government mob of around 300 snowballed into a march of more than 10,000 — including monks, students and motorcycle taxi riders — when police fired on the group and serious-

ly injured one man. Later Thursday hundreds of police poured in to quell the demonstration.

The bloodthirsty mob had earlier in the day called for the lynching of ethnic Vietnamese, blamed for a spate of recent poisonings and linked to Hun Sen's CPP which led Hanoi-backed governments here in the 1980s.

Opposition leaders have been blamed for whipping up racism, which last week led to the brutal mob killings of five ethnic Vietnamese.

A police crackdown on opposition protests Monday left one dead, and Tuesday police smashed a two-week sit-in dubbed "Democracy Square" opposite the National Assembly. One Buddhist monk was reported killed Wednesday by riot police, a report authorities deny.

FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party filed more than 800 complaints of poll fraud, but all were dismissed by the National Election Committee.

Only a fraction of those complaints were heard on appeal but subsequently rejected by the Constitutional Council.

The opposition claims both bodies are pro-CPP and has refused to recognise the official election results. These show the CPP winning just over 41 per cent of the vote, enough for a majority in parliament but not the two-thirds needed to form a government on its own.

Indonesian military promises to crack down on student protests

JAKARTA (AP) — Thousands of troops and police were stationed around central Jakarta Friday as the military chief promised to crackdown on student protests against Indonesian President B.J. Habibie and his handling of the country's worst economic crisis in 30 years.

Also Friday police broke up 70 protesters outside the U.S. Embassy and the Defence Ministry who demanded independence for the Indonesian-controlled western half of New Guinea.

Officers were armed with sticks, but there was no violence. Nearby, squads of soldiers and several armoured vehicles were positioned inside the grounds of the state palace following days of protests against soaring food prices. Dozens of troops were also stationed in an adjacent park where a noisy demonstration took place Thursday.

Soldiers stood guard in its centre, the site of Indonesia's National Monument tower. Others relaxed under shade trees.

Several strategic buildings, including the Parliament, were also guarded.

Armed Forces commander Gen. Wiranto said the military "will not hesitate to take stern action against actions that clearly lead to unrest across this nation," he was quoted as saying by the official Antara news agency.

He said the military would not allow the interests of 202 million Indonesians to be endangered by a minority of protesters.

Wiranto said he had been told by journalists that some protesters have been paid to disrupt government efforts to fix the ailing economy.

Pakistan opens debate on accepting nuclear test ban

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's parliament opened a special debate Friday on accepting a nuclear test ban treaty, after months of tough international sanctions against its atomic tests pushed the nation's economy to the brink of collapse.

Pakistan, a nation of 130 million people, tested six nuclear devices in May in response to similar tests by its hostile neighbour India. The two South Asian nations have fought three wars since 1947, so their nuclear sabre-rattling spread alarm over the risk of them actually using atomic weapons.

Key donors, including the United States, Japan, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, cut off

Pakistan to protest the tests. That left Pakistan desperately short of foreign currency, and in danger of defaulting on its September payments on \$32 billion in foreign debt.

Publicly, Pakistan insists that it cannot be coerced into signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, although the Pakistani news media says the decision in principle to sign the treaty has already been made.

"We will make this decision in accordance with the wishes of parliament and the wishes of the Pakistani people," said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as he entered Parliament for the start of the debate. "We will not make this decision

under any [outside] pressure."

Proponents of nuclear testing filled the streets after May's test blasts, celebrating what many in this impoverished, but proud nation saw as Pakistan taking its proper place among the world's nuclear powers, and closing an arms gap with India.

Although mainstream political parties appear set to endorse the treaty, the government is wary of small but influential right-wing religious parties.

The government has said it wants a broad national consensus on the treaty, starting with the debate in a joint session of Parliament's upper and lower houses. The government has also assured the

public that a promise not to test weapons does not stop nuclear weapons development.

Parliament's next treaty debate, expected to last into next week, opens the same day as a team from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank arrived in the capital of Islamabad for talks on an economic bailout package for Pakistan.

The donors stalled the last payment of a \$1.6 billion loan and credits package after the nuclear tests. Pakistan this week resorted to signing a \$1.5 billion bailout deal with the Islamic Development Bank, at a crippling interest rate of more than 10 per cent.

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Situation requires meaningful review

THE U.N. Security Council's decision over the weekend to suspend the periodic reviews of Iraq's compliance with the inspection regime only complicates what is already a tense Iraqi-U.N. relation. Baghdad went to great lengths in meeting the infinite demands of the U.N. even to the extent of opening the presidential palaces for international investigation and surveillance. When all the Iraqi compliances with a string of international demands drew no appreciation or any meaningful reaction from the council members, especially Washington and London, Iraq was forced to react in a negative manner. Iraq has apparently reached the bitter conclusion that after more than eight years of crippling sanctions that neither the U.S. nor Britain are serious about relaxing the council's punitive sanctions against Iraq and its people.

Iraq deserves to be given its due after it extends all possible cooperation with the international team seeking verifications about all weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. The recurrent standoff between the council and the Iraqi authorities calls for a fresh review of the entire Iraqi question. U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan has called for such a review when he appealed for a reconsideration of the Iraqi situation. Annan's plea for sanity, however, received no noticeable support from some permanent members of the council.

The appeal of Secretary General Annan for a complete overhaul of the U.N. approach to Iraq remains the only viable alternative to the current stalemate. The international community is therefore called upon to begin the process of re-examining the Iraqi file.

There is nothing that prevents the Security Council from lifting the sanctions gradually while keeping the inspection regime intact. That would encourage the Iraqi authorities to cooperate with the U.N. inspectors. The council could even work out a schedule by which more Iraqi cooperation would be rewarded by a lifting of parts of the sanctions.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al-Rai's Fakhri Qu'war called for early parliamentary elections to bring representatives from all parts of the country. He said the dialogues on the highest levels from the government and all political parties, associations and unions represent a true breakthrough in the internal political situation of the country. The appointment of the new government means a new era of transparency, open dialogue and credibility. It also means more work devoted to combating unemployment, poverty, corruption and increasing the economic growth rate of the Kingdom, said Qu'war. Eliminating corruption necessitates dialogue with different levels of society, said the writer. But time should not be wasted when it comes to democracy, because democracy is essential for modern society. No obstacles are hindering Jordan's democratic path, said the writer.

Al-Dustour's Zeid Mheisen charged that the real beneficiaries from wars in the Third World are Western countries. The West causes war and destruction and then comes to build what is left, said Mheisen. When the Iraq-Iran war erupted, companies from the West flocked to both countries, and stayed in the fanciest hotels, in order to display the latest technology in human destruction. The West agrees on one policy concerning the Third World: total destruction, claimed the writer. After the end of the war, the same people came back in different guises. This time they came in order to build schools, hospitals, bridges and roads. The only losers in these wars are the Third World countries, who pay for destroying themselves as well as the cost of rebuilding, added Mheisen.

Jordanian Perspective

U.S. need for success bad omen

Dr. Musa Keilani

DENNIS ROSS, the American trouble-shooter in the Middle East peace process, is in the region in what is widely described as a renewed U.S. effort to narrow the differences between the Palestinians and Israel in the immediate next phase of the implementation of the Oslo agreements. The focus of the mission, we are told, is on removing or at least modifying obstacles to suit Palestinian acceptance of the condition that Israel is attaching to withdrawing from three per cent of the 13 per cent West Bank land it is urged to leave under an American compromise.

The physical aspect of a breakthrough would be a possible meeting between Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and a formal announcement of agreement. But the political aspect of an agreement goes beyond the shores of the Middle East. It could be a major foreign policy achievement for U.S. President Bill Clinton if Ross is successful in his mission, particularly at a time when the president has run into deep trouble at home with the Monica Lewinsky affair.

There are even suggestions that Clinton's quest for a foreign policy success rather than anxiety to lift the logjam in the Israeli-Palestinian track is behind the new Ross mission. In any event, the U.S. needs to use either the stick or the carrot to nudge Netanyahu to reconsider his preconditions for a 13 per cent redeployment in the West Bank. It seems more likely that it has to be a carrot since

the stick could seriously weaken Clinton among pro-Israeli American congressmen whose support he desperately needs if he hopes to escape impeachment in Congress over the Lewinsky affair. In his desperate search for a way out of the trap that is closing in, Clinton might have forgotten that he cannot count on Netanyahu to rise to the occasion and help him out. He has rebuffed Netanyahu at least twice over the Israeli prime minister's requests for White House meetings only to relent later. If that was not enough, then there were the various comments that have been attributed to Hillary Clinton regarding a Palestinian state as well as other remarks made by his aides on how much the president detested doing business with the hardline Likud leader and how the Clinton administration tried to influence the last elections in Israel in favour of the Labour.

It is true that such situations are typical of international politics and could be made to disappear overnight with the right goodwill and understanding. But then, none of those situations would have as a player Netanyahu, whose obsession with the past — starting with the "trauma" of the death of his brother in Entebbe — is well known.

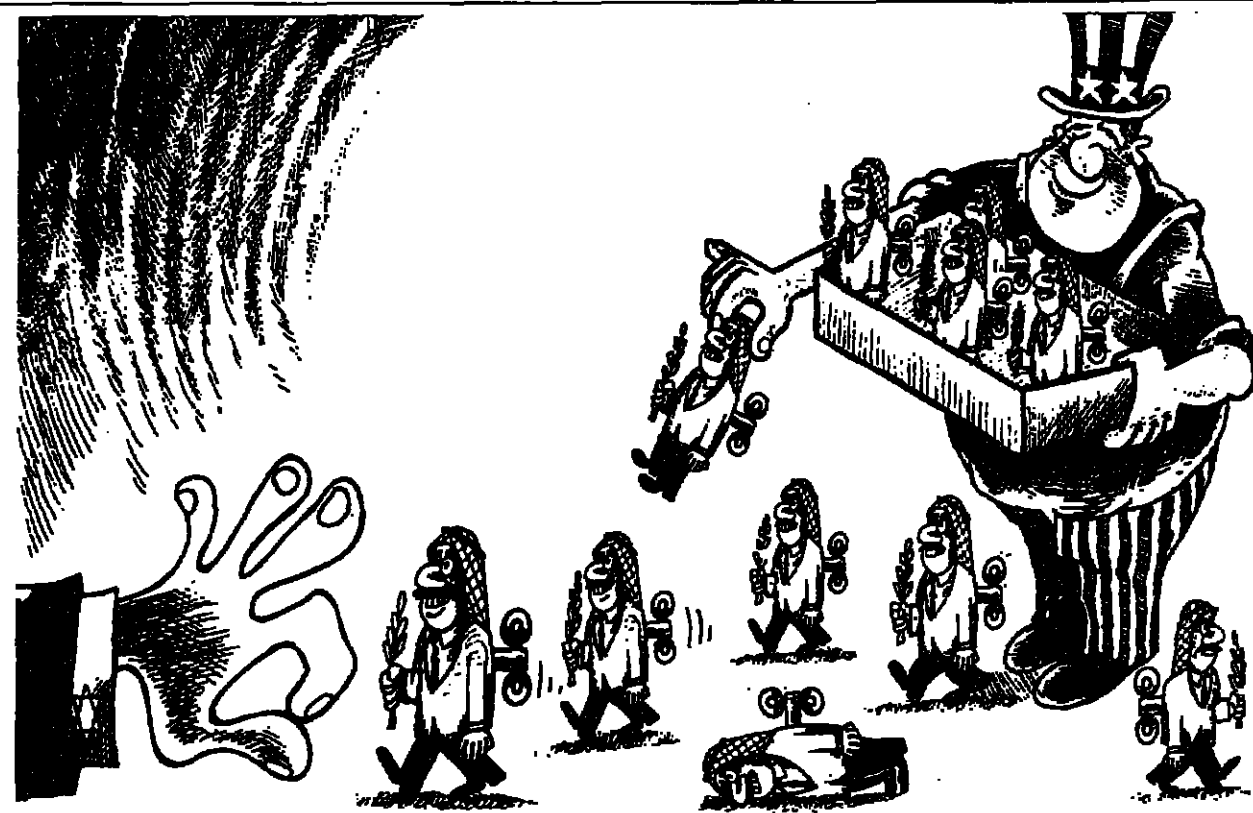
Netanyahu has no incentive either to oblige a U.S. president whose political future is hanging in the balance (and let us not forget that when the Lewinsky scandal hit the headlines, there were whispered far fetched suggestions in Tehran, Libya and even in Washington that Lewinsky could have been an Israeli mole planted in the White

House just for the purpose of securing an Israeli "hold" over the U.S. president.)

To say the least, the dice was loaded against an equitable solution to the present Israeli-Palestinian deadlock even before Ross arrived in the region. At the same time, we don't know what quid pro quo proposals he could be carrying. But we do know that none of those proposals could possibly bear any good tidings for the Arab side of the Middle Eastern divide, because they would be tailor-made to serve Israeli interests.

If anything, and because Ross needs to have a deal under his belt before he heads home to his boss, it would not be Netanyahu, but Arafat who would be pushed into making compromises to suit the Israeli conditions and tastes. And in this case and at this instance, it would seem that the Palestinians, and indeed the Arabs at large, are also asked to pay the price of Clinton's sexual adventures.

But then, what we risk is another explosion of violence. As the latest opinion poll among Palestinians has indicated, the man on the West Bank street is losing faith in the peace process and fewer people see Arafat as a credible leader and president for the Palestinian nation in waiting. That translates into increasing frustration among Palestinians, and incidents like the shooting of a mother of four on Thursday will only add fuel to Palestinian anger and prompt hitherto unlikely candidates to undertake desperate actions with or without being allied with any hardline group.



M. KAHIL

The partition of the Congo

By Gwynne Dyer

IT'S ONLY a matter of time now before we get used to hearing about East Congo and West Congo. The partition of Africa's third-largest country is an accomplished fact, and a ceasefire, if it can be made to stick, will only solidify that division.

It wasn't meant to end this way. When the rebels of the Congolese Democracy Movement launched their revolt against Congolese President Laurent Kabila from eastern Congo on 2 August, their aim was not to divide the country. They hoped to repeat their feat of 1996-97, when they ousted long-ruling dictator Mobutu Sese Seko in a seven-month campaign and put Kabila into power.

This time they had to move even faster, since Kabila tried to strengthen his position by inciting the Congolese to massacre. "Take a machete, a spear, an arrow, a hoe, a spade, rakes, nails, truncheons, barbed wire, stones and the like to kill the Rwandan Tutsis," state radio told the Congolese — and in the capital, Kinshasa, they did as they were told.

No 'Rwandans' died as a result, but people who looked as if they might belong to the Congo's Tutsi minority have been killed in large numbers in Kinshasa in recent weeks. For the Congolese Tutsis, and for their Tutsi cousins in Rwanda where the traumatised survivors of the Hutu-led genocide still rule over a Hutu-majority population, it confirmed their belief that only rapid offensive action could avert another anti-Tutsi genocide.

Their strategy worked well. Starting from over 1,500 km. to the east, along the Congo's borders with Rwanda and Uganda, within three weeks they were on the outskirts of Kinshasa. Kabila retreated to his ethnic homeland, the mineral-rich southern province of Katanga, leaving panicked ministers behind. But then came the foreign intervention.

Kabila won few friends in his fifteen months in power and his troops were no match for the rebels, but the Congo is the size of Western Europe — and there are no good roads. To take Kinshasa and end the war fast, rebel commander Jean-Pierre Ondekane

took a big risk: he commandeered three passenger jets and airlifted troops all the way from the eastern Congo to Kitona, an airport West of Kinshasa near where the Congo river empties into the Atlantic.

It was these few hundred troops, swollen to thousands by defectors from Kabila's army, who almost took Kinshasa in the third week of August. But it was the sort of stunt that you would never attempt against a militarily competent foe — and when Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia sent troops into the Congo on 21 August, it backfired badly. Within a week, the rebel forces west of Kinshasa had been reduced to small bands waging a guerrilla struggle.

Why did other African countries intervene in the Congo? Their official reason was that Rwandan troops were actively participating in the rebellion. This was true, as was Kabila's claim that Uganda was also backing the revolt. But it was precisely Rwandan troops and Ugandan backing that brought Kabila himself to power in early 1997, and other African countries did not complain then.

One difference this time is the fact that Kabila, unlike Mobutu, comes from a Marxist background. All three leaders who intervened — Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe, Angola's Eduardo dos Santos, and Namibia's Sam Nujoma — remain loyal to the Marxist tradition that formed them, and feel a certain sense of solidarity with Kabila. But they all had pragmatic motives, too.

Mugabe, who sent 3,000 Zimbabwean troops to Kinshasa, wants to re-assert his old regional leadership role against South Africa's Nelson Mandela, and to show his own increasingly restive citizens that revolt does not succeed. Nujoma, who sent a token 250 troops, is rewriting the Namibian constitution to permit himself to stay in power indefinitely, and instinctively backs fellow strongmen.

But the key intervention was from Angola, which shares a 1,500-km. border with the Congo. Indeed, that long, porous border is the main reason the Angolan government intervened: it's afraid that if the Angolan civil war reignites (an odds-on likelihood), the

Congolese border will once again be the chief avenue of supply for its UNITA guerrilla opponents. So dos Santos sent in upwards of 10,000 troops backed by artillery, tanks, and air power, and effectively destroyed the rebels west of Kinshasa.

Without the intervention, as Mugabe frankly said, the rebels would have taken Kinshasa and inherited a united Congo. But even with the intervention, Kabila is not going to regain control of the eastern Congo by military means, because his foreign backers will not take the risk and bear the expense of committing their troops to such a large and doubtful campaign. So the result is stalemate.

When the Rwandan and Ugandan governments backed the anti-Mobutu revolt last year, they did so mainly out of self-interest: they wanted somebody in charge in Kinshasa who would curb guerrilla raids into Rwanda and Uganda by guerrilla groups sheltering in the Congo. But other things being equal, they also wanted a better government for the Congo, and Kabila seemed to be their man.

He wasn't. Once in office, Kabila jailed his critics and began filling the government with fellow Katangese (the ministers of home affairs, justice, mining, and transport, the central bank governor, the police inspector-general, the national security director and the armed forces head), including Kabila's own son and cousin. And the cross-border raids into Uganda and Rwanda continued.

The Rwandan and Ugandan motive for intervening is, once again, the security of their own borders. Once again, they'd like to do the Congo a favour at the same time and give it a better government, which is why they backed the gamble to take Kinshasa. But if that is unattainable, then they are perfectly content to sit in the eastern third of the country indefinitely.

The net effect of the past six weeks of fighting, in other words, has been to divide the Congo down the middle. The fighting may soon abate, but the division will probably last a long time.

The writer is a London-based independent journalist and historian, whose articles are published in 45 countries.

Turkish ties in focus

Compiled by
 Mohammad Ben Hussein

In a busy week of events columnists defended Jordanian-Turkish relations, while others commented on the U.N. General Assembly meeting, North-Korean arms sales, the Middle East peace process and Jordan's agricultural situation.

Al Rai's Fahed Faneek defended the recent developments in Jordanian-Turkish relations and denied allegations of a military coalition. He said Jordan is a free country, and its leadership can act according to its national interests, free from any external influence. Due to the strategic importance of both countries, Jordan-Turkey ties are justified. Turkey is the gate-way to Europe, through which Jordanian trucks heading for eastern Europe pass, and Jordan is the only route for Turkey's exports to the Gulf countries, said Faneek. Faneek denied Syrian allegations that Jordan is entering a military coalition with Turkey and Israel, and asked how Syria could enter a military coalition with Iran. Syria facilitated the entry of Iran to Lebanon through Iranian backed militia, according to Faneek. Iran and Syria collaborated in blackmailing Gulf Arab countries, the deal being that Syria receives money in exchange for persuading Iran not to attack neighbouring Gulf countries, said Faneek, who also claimed that Syria closed the Iraqi pipe-line passing through Syria during the Iraq-Iran war in an effort to support Iran. Faneek charged that it is Syria which acted against the well-being of the Arab states, and lashed out at Syria for creating rumours about Jordan.

Al Rai's Raju Al Issa commented on Thursday's meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations. The writer doubted the effect decisions made by the General Assembly might have. He reviewed the mission of the Assembly, comprised of 185 countries. During the meeting, a president of the General Assembly gets elected from the non-permanent members of the Security Council. The writer charged that most of the decisions taken during the meetings do not get implemented, especially concerning Israel. Al Issa said the Arab issues used to dominate the agenda during 1948 and 1949, but unfortunately decisions in favour of the Arabs was never carried out. According to United Nations regulations, all members are obliged to pay annual fees, and any country that does not pay, does not vote. Ironically, the U.S. does not pay, and yet has the power

of veto, said Al Issa. Thus, Washington is steering the United Nations in accordance with its interests, added Al Issa.

Al Dustour's Yaqoub Jabr commented on the news that Iran or Libya might buy North Korean missile technology. Any country has the right to protect itself, said Jabr, and since Israel commands a very advanced missile technology gives Iran, and any other country in the region, the right to own nuclear technology which might provide a balance of power. The countries of the region are so much more in need of development of its infrastructure rather than a destructive war, he added.

Al Dustour's Majed Abu Daik commented on the visit of the American peace mediator Dennis Ross to the region. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is being pressured towards the Israeli position, said Daik. The writer expected that the outcome of the secret talks between the PNA and Israel would not be in favour of the Palestinians. The new deal will minimise the size of the Israeli troop redeployment from the West Bank, he said. What is worse is entering the final stage discussions before completing the second stage, said Daik. The important issues related to the second stage — the Airport, the port, and safe passage — will eventually be postponed to be discussed in the final stage. Postponing talks on the airport, the port, and the safe passage would halt very important issues already delayed, added the writer.

Al Rai's Tareq Massarwa discussed the agricultural situation in the Kingdom and its need for more funding from the Central Bank, in addition to ways of improving farmers' situations. The Central Bank allocated JD10 million for the Industrial Development Bank and the Agricultural Credit Corporation. Massarwa said this move is good, but not enough. The farmer is not interested any more in taking loans from the Corporation, because he does not want to plant any more. The irrigated crops are not marketed well inside or outside the country, and the produce depending on rain water does not make any profit, because the market is saturated with imports enjoying government subsidy, said Massarwa. The only way out is amending the legislations passed in the past four years, he suggested. The government gives support to consumers of agricultural produce, but not to its producers which leaves the farmer in a shaky position, said Massarwa. The writer suggested a minimum price of produce as a way of protecting the farmers' interests.

Week in Print

A dream between the twin towers

Decadent Western music is coming to Muslim Malaysia. But who really benefits? Michael Church reports:

HOSTING THE Commonwealth Games was always going to be a moment of truth for Kuala Lumpur, and the timing now is cruel. A collapsing currency has littered the Malaysian capital with abandoned projects — shuttered shops, half-built ghost-towns, concrete pillars supporting an invisible monorail — but amazingly, the key things are bang on target. The stadium is up-and-running, and something remarkable has appeared at the base of the Petronas Twin Towers — the world's tallest building — like a silver football trapped between the feet of a giant.

A symphony hall is a must for any Far Eastern country wishing to Westernise itself, but this one — with its brand-new orchestra — reflects an extraordinary melding of cultures, where British musicians have been the catalyst. For Muslim Malaysia has traditionally viewed Western music as decadent. The classical torch has been carried by the ethnic-Chinese business class, who routinely put their off-spring through British piano grades. And in Malaysia the cultured Chinese are resented by poorer Malays as the Jews were in turn-of-the-century Vienna. This inferiority-complex is what Prime Minister Mahathir terms "the Malay dilemma," and resolving that dilemma through job-quotas has long been the policy of the government.

But orchestras are not assembly-lines, and violinists aren't created overnight. When the state-owned Petronas oil company decreed a resident orchestra for their new concert hall, they asked the London branch of IMG Artists to set it up. The resulting band is preponderantly American, British, and Hun-

garian, with just four Malaysians who are all — surprise, surprise! — ethnic Chinese, including a young harpist found studying in Manchester. Is this yet another snub for the Malays?

No, because Petronas chairman Tan Sri Aziz is playing a long and clever game. On hearing that a Malaysian woman conductor called Chean Si Ooi was working in Germany, he sent IMG to check her out. It emerged that she had long been trying to found a Malaysian symphony orchestra and she is now resident conductor in Kuala Lumpur. Meanwhile, Tan Sri appointed as his music director the Dutch conductor, Kees Bakels, who is determined, like Chean Si, to nurture any local composing talent that he comes across. "Even if the quality isn't great, I'd rather do something Malaysian than import high-grade, ready-made stuff from China or Japan."

As general manager — the lynchpin of any orchestra — Tan Sri chose John Duffy, a former LSO boss whose gilt-edged reputation drew a flood of applications from players in Britain and America. Indeed, I have never encountered a more contented bunch than the players I meet here, and not just because pay and conditions are so good. "Creating this orchestra has been a dream," says Duffy. "Starting off with no prior ill-feeling between players and management, we've been able to design a contract which is right for the local situation." The unique thing about this contract is that it stipulates that every player should also teach, which brings us to Tan Sri's next goal: A full-scale conservatoire in Kuala Lumpur, from which his orchestra will eventually be staffed.

As it happens, there already is a conservatoire of sorts, in a scatter of bungalows 10 miles outside town. Just two years old, this is part of the rapidly-expanding University Putra Malaysia, and it only

exists because its vice-chancellor asked the Birmingham-trained Malaysian percussionist Minni Ang to create a campus orchestra. To have an orchestra, she replied, you first need a music department, so hey presto! she got one. The full orchestra has to rehearse on the lawns, which can be problematic in the rainy season, and the paper-thin walls of the bungalows let all the practitioners hear each other, which makes for a merry din. But these students work with such intensity that nobody cares about privacy, and miracles do happen.

The miracle I encountered goes by the name of Loo Fung Chiat, a shy 21-year-old who delivers Chopin with thunder and lightning, and who tells me her goal is a scholarship to London. I predict she'll get one with ease, but that's not the prime purpose of this institution. "Until now," says Minni Ang "music in Malaysia has been the province of the rich. Hopefully this department, which is for poor students like Fung Chiat, will change things a little."

Another of Ang's students is a father-of-three called Mizan, who bikes 100 miles each day for the privilege of learning the rumba. And as a Muslim he is prepared to answer a question which his fellow-students are too embarrassed even to discuss. Why is it that local Islamists condemn Western music? "It's a question of instruments," he says. "Drums, for example, don't deflect us from thinking about life after death. Even the Prophet approved of music with rhythm, which spurred people to get on with their lives. But strings are so beautiful that they make us forget about our higher purpose. That makes them morally dangerous."

Back at the Malaysian Philharmonic, people feel no less hedged about the religion. Tan Sri tells me of the problem he has had with "a small group who would like to use religious differences for political

ends." Controversy focused on the concert hall's organ — seen by some as a Christian instrument. He has had it covered in Malaysian designs, and now it looks properly oriental. Meanwhile, any work with a text must be submitted for government approval before it's performed: Grand opera, with its penchant, for illicit liaisons, wouldn't stand a chance.

More seriously, anything on which a Zionist construction might be put is out of the question. Elijah would be banned on textual grounds, not because its composer Mendelssohn was a Jew. But in Malaysia, which has no diplomatic relations with Israel, Jewishness in performers is another hazard. Chean Si recalls the day a youth orchestra she was bringing was nearly stopped at the border because one girl was Israeli: They only got through thanks to intercession by Malaysia's First Lady, who happened to be one of their patrons. And then there are the Jewish performers who refuse to come: Kees Bakels speaks with contempt of the virtuosi — no names, but we can guess — who won't play in Malaysia, but gladly do so in Muslim Turkey. Never mind, the indefatigable Yehudi Menuhin has booked to play in KL next year. Malaysians may observe prayers five times every Friday — the Petronas towers are equipped with mini-mosques for office-workers — but this is still one of the most moderate Muslim countries in the world.

Sean Connery may be about to shoot a film in the Petronas Twin Towers, but the young Malaysian intelligentsia have their own reasons for ambivalence towards their new musical toy, particularly in a time of ferocious recession. "It's like Scarlett O'Hara buying a new dress while civil war is raging," says lawyer Sheena Gurbakhash, who goes on to warn the expat players to fine-tooth their con-

tracts. "We in Malaysia are good at wooing foreigners to work for us, and then exploiting them once they're here." Eddin Khoo, poet and music promoter, sees the orchestra as a calculated political statement. "Over the last 10 years our government has fired to remake Malaysia as a Western capitalist society, and to deny its multi-racial, multi-religious nature. The orchestra is another evasion of these truths. While millions are poured into an imported musical culture, our own music is dying." Both these commentators want to see the Malaysian Philharmonic incorporate local instruments, and local musical forms. Since they have potential allies in Bakels and Chean Si, this reasonable wish may come true.

But the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Recently, after a ceremonial drum-roll by the prime minister, the new hall was christened. It's quite small and very pretty, reminiscent of Birmingham's Symphony Hall; its acoustics aren't right yet, but that's normal. And the orchestra was very decent for a first outing: Strauss, Rachmaninov and Ravel, plus two pieces of entirely forgivable tokenism. There being no world-class Malaysian violin prodigy, 13-year-old Yura Lee was imported from Korea to dazzle us, and dazzle she did; on the other hand, the "Malaysian Overture" by an indigenous young composer was a bit of a hoot (Rimsky-Korsakov not so much pastiche as lifted in chunks).

This whole ambitious exercise may be an artificial transplant carried out by an act of political will but, put in the wider Asian context, it prompts an arresting thought. As Western symphonic tradition runs out of steam, a new one may now be rising in the East.

— The Independent

Women

Lesbian who fought military ban seeks U.S. House seat

By Martin Wolf
Reuters

A HUSH filled the packed hall as Democratic congressional hopeful Gretche Cammermeyer prepared to answer an intensely personal question.

"Describe one instance in which you faced an ethical dilemma and tell us how you resolved it," intoned the moderator, as a-candidates forum on a recent evening in this small town 100 km north of Seattle.

As any informed voter in Washington's Second District knows, Cammermeyer spent years in an ultimately successful fight against the ban on gays in the military and now is trying to become the first openly lesbian member of Congress.

"Has anyone seen 'Serving in Silence'?" Cammermeyer asked, referring to the book and television

movie about her battle with the military as the nation's highest-ranking officer to be discharged for homosexuality.

Heads nodded expectantly. But Cammermeyer steered away from relating the well-known story that propelled her to national prominence and chose another scene from the movie, describing how early in her career as an Army nurse she refused a direct order to leave her patients for an emergency drill.

"You know I am a fighter, that I am honest. That is what got me into trouble many years ago to begin with," she said.

While the no-nonsense retired nurse focuses on her main issues of improving the nation's health care and education, her sexual orientation is never far from the surface as she tries to break down another barrier in American politics.

Although some members of Congress have acknowledged their homosexuality and later been re-elected, no openly gay non-incumbent ever has been elected.

Cammermeyer, 36, is favoured to beat businessman Fran Eintz in the Democratic primary Sept. 15 and go on to face two-term Republican Representative Jack Metcalf, who has accused his rival of being a "spokesperson for the lesbian lifestyle." She is the controversial lesbian Army National Guard colonel who was recruited by the Democrat (sic) Congressional Campaign Committee, especially ultra-liberal Barney Frank, to move into our district and run against me," Metcalf wrote in a shrill four-page fund-raising letter.

Cammermeyer, a highly decorated officer at the time of her discharge, called the outburst "disappointing" and Metcalf's campaign

has pledged to refrain from raising the issue again.

But in a largely rural district stretching from the rugged peaks of the remote North Cascade mountains to burgeoning suburbs north of Seattle, Cammermeyer's lesbian status could add another obstacle in her uphill battle to unseat Metcalf.

"I think in the long run her orientation will hurt her," said Portland, Oregon-based political analyst Tim Hibbins, who worked 12 years as a pollster for the district's longtime Democratic Representative Al Swift.

"It's not an accident that no openly gay or lesbian person has yet been elected," said Massachusetts Democrat Barney Frank, who has been re-elected to the House of Representatives five times since acknowledging his homosexuality. "There is still some prejudice out there. I must say I can't think of any

person who dissolves and refuses that prejudice (better) than Gretche Cammermeyer," Cammermeyer, whose first name is pronounced "Greta," has collected an impressive roster of endorsements and a sizable war chest of cash, tapping Hollywood connections including Barbara Streisand and Glenn Close, who portrayed her in the movie. As of her latest report on June 30, she already had raised nearly \$500,000, slightly more than Metcalf.

But while Metcalf, 70, won a second term in 1996 by less than 2,000 votes, he still is considered the favorite.

"It's understandable why this tops the Democratic target list year after year," Amy Walter, an editor of The Cook Report political newsletter, said. "But I think he has done a pretty good job of shoring himself up. He's been able to portray himself as a moderate and as someone who understands what's important to the district." Both Metcalf and Eintz have used Cammermeyer's national connections against her. "She's the national candidate. I'm the local candidate," Eintz said.

"That's really throwing in a red herring," Cammermeyer told Reuters. "What you're looking for is leadership, integrity, administrative abilities and skills, somebody who is dedicated and willing to fight. I have a track record for that." Cammermeyer's inspiring life story is the stuff Hollywood movies are made of. Born in Nazi-occupied Norway, she unwittingly served in the resistance as an infant when her baby carriage was used to smuggle weapons.

She immigrated to the United States with her family at nine and joined the Army in part to repay her adopted country for allowing her to live "the American dream," she said.

Cammermeyer served seven years on active duty as an Army nurse, including a 14-month tour in Vietnam at the height of U.S. involvement in the war. Later she resumed her career as a reservist, eventually rising to become chief nurse of the Washington state National Guard.

In a 1989 interview for a security clearance, Cammermeyer, who had divorced her husband, acknowledged she was a lesbian, triggering the events that led to her less-than-honourable discharge despite an otherwise unblemished record.

After winning reinstatement, she retired and could have continued living comfortably on bucolic Whidbey Island, but instead she launched her campaign last November and has been running hard ever since.

"From early morning to late at night — there is no life," she said. "All you do is campaign. But I know I will enjoy being a member of Congress because it is there where you can have a voice and make a change."

Dolly Parton: Still going strong at 52

By Pat Harris
Reuters

DOLLY PARTON'S new album, for which she wrote all the music, features one song about a young girl abused by her father, but the "little girl" from east Tennessee says she has always gotten along well with men herself.

"I've always had a complete understanding of them, which probably comes from being brought up with so many brothers and my father and all my uncles," the 52-year-old Parton said.

But she says men still apply a double standard to women, although she sees changes at least in the music industry.

"Women are getting a chance now that they didn't get before, and I think that's great. It shouldn't matter whether you're male or female out in that world when it comes to using your talent," she told Reuters in an interview.

As for the song about child abuse, Parton wants everyone to know it is not an autobiographical tale. In fact, she says, it was her father's love, along with his business sense, that helped make her both a popular and a commercial success.

"I don't care what people may say about it (the song) but I'm a songwriter. My father was a great father. He didn't bust our ass near as much as he needed to," she attributes most of her business acumen, an unusual characteristic in women when she broke into the male-dominated industry in the early '70s, to her father's influence.

"My daddy never had an education but he was real smart minded with real good common horse sense. And he could stretch a dollar forever and ever and he always seemed to manage

with 12 kids and all. I've often thought that if he'd had any kind of education he could have been a millionaire," she said.

But there was little opportunity for her parents, Robert and Avie Lee Parton, who were mired in poverty, living in a shack and scratching out a living as sharecroppers. She was the first in her family to earn a high school diploma and the first to leave home and head

exploring scripts for a TV movie based on one of the songs in the new album — the one about the abused daughter, titled "Blue Valley Songbird." "I'd love to be able the new Decca album. In the past, she has performed all over the world at the most prestigious clubs and theatres.

She enjoys reminiscing about her movies, particularly "Rhinestone," for which she brought friends from the Grand Ole Opry to California to appear with her and Sylvester Stallone.

One of the performers was the late Opry pianist Del Wood who, she said, "cracked me up when she and the others cooked on hot plates in the fancy hotel rooms I'd put them in!"

"The meals at the hotels were all on me, of course, but occasionally they'd hop on a bus to a grocery store and buy their bologna and beans and come back to the hotel and fix their dinners. But we are hillbillies, you know, and there's nuthin' like home cooking."

She also remembers when she teamed with Carol Burnett on a TV special ("she is absolutely the best that TV has ever had to offer!") and was scared to death about learning dance steps which, she says, were not at all a part of her expertise.

In addition to various business ventures, Parton has parlayed her "Dollywood" amusement park at Gatlinburg, Tennessee, into a multimillion-dollar attraction. She has six homes including three in Nashville, two in Los Angeles, and an apartment in New York and moves around among them.

But she loves her bus most of all, calling it a "seventh home" and using it for business trips whenever she can. "There's plenty of life and love left in me and I plan to enjoy every blessed second of it," she concluded.



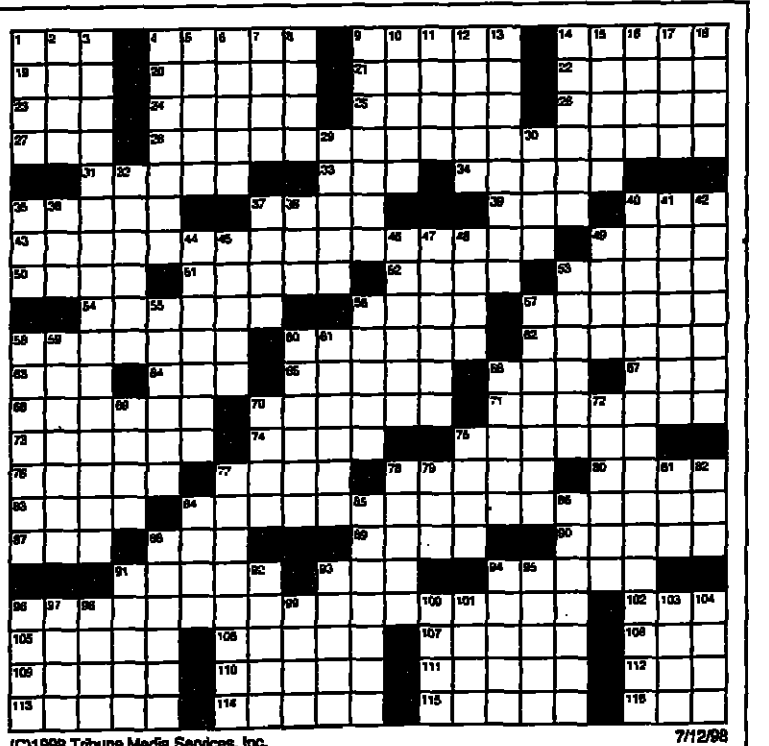
Country music superstar Dolly Parton shows off her Country Music Award to the media after winning the Vocal Event of the Year for her version of 'I Will Always Love You' she recorded with Vince Gill (Reuters photo)

The Saturday Crossword

TREASURES

By Robert H. Wolfe, North Woodmere, New York

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| ACROSS | DOWN |
| 1 Pass | 89 Separates out |
| 4 Of the chestbone | 91 Field movie, " |
| 8 Behind out | 93 Juliet Fortes |
| 14 Region | 94 Taiwan Strait |
| 19 Felling tool | 95 Island |
| 20 Colorful | 96 Here for a share |
| 21 Ornamental stone | of treasure? |
| 22 Hamlet, to Horatio | 102 Protest vote |
| 23 Book datum | 103 Stand by |
| 24 Peace disease | 106 Ridden |
| 25 Two under per | 107 Bar legally |
| 26 Bitter's partner? | 108 Expected |
| 27 Contain | 109 Poetry |
| 28 Spite | 110 Rivers |
| 29 Save buried | 111 Solo |
| 30 treasure? | 112 Time period |
| 31 Disney movie, | 113 compound |
| 32 "Dragon" | 114 Outcast |
| 33 Exclamations | 115 Customs |
| 34 Charles Cernille | 116 Collegian cheer |
| 35 Fewer and farther | |
| between | |
| 37 French opera | 1 Cornic Kaplan |
| 38 Ra's Luree Massenb | 2 Figure-skater's |
| 39 Eliminate | jump |
| 40 Black-and-white | 3 Instinct to save |
| Arctic whale | treasure? |
| 43 Treasure in | 4 Eminent conductor |
| Pandora's box? | 5 Open-mouthed |
| 45 Legend | 6 Nigeria's capital |
| 46 Olive | 7 Legendary Norse |
| 47 Opera solo | king |
| 48 Straddles | 8 Scottish dance |
| 49 Become a gully | 9 Part of ATF |
| 50 Sink | 10 Silverware beam |
| 51 Process for | 11 August-born, |
| scoring the injured | moody |
| 52 Stillborn | 12 Curved moldings |
| 53 One's time | 13 Lizard containers |
| 54 Ransacker | 14 Imminent |
| 55 4-wheel drive | 15 Mob meless |
| transport | 16 Needle case |
| | 17 Beesides |
| | 18 Spotted |
| | 19 Soft drives |
| | 20 Nesting of the |
| | bride |
| | 21 Conger catfish |
| | 22 Spotted's cry |
| | 23 Cargo |
| | 24 Get another's |
| | treasure first? |
| | 25 Curio shelves |
| | 26 Puts between |
| | 27 Stock units of |
| | fewer than 100 |
| | others |
| | 28 Medicate |
| | 29 Soup dispenser |
| | 30 Plant fungi |
| | 31 Room's asset |
| | 32 First Arabic letter |
| | 33 Nicholson film's |
| | man of honor |



Pressure mounts on world leaders to calm markets

LONDON (R) — Pressure mounted in financial markets on Friday for the world's economic leaders to prevent a relentless crisis in emerging markets from becoming a global economic disaster.

The growing conviction among analysts was that Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan may be the only man left with the power to prevent this happening.

Major stock markets on Friday continued to fall and the health of the global economy was seen at risk. The rout in emerging markets continued.

The Group of Seven (G-7) industrialised nations is scheduled to hold a meeting in London on Monday. But in the absence of political leadership, all eyes turned to Greenspan, the one person seen as able to influence the global environment by lowering interest rates.

"Alan Greenspan is the only one in the driving seat who might be able to do something," said Avinash Persaud, head of currency research at J.P. Morgan in London.

"Individual countries are too small to deal with this tidal wave of contagion and it's begging for a global policy response," he said.

The worrying thing is that even Greenspan may not have enough ammunition. Any U.S. interest rate cut is expected to be small and some analysts say this alone may not lift investor sentiment.

Latin American economies, ironically the most diligent students of Western economic orthodoxy in recent years, are the latest to be swamped by financial market turbulence.

Investment funds are now so reluctant to leave their money in even

remotely risky assets that few have any confidence that Brazil, which accounts for about 40 per cent of the gross domestic product of Latin America, can protect its currency.

As Brazilian stocks plunged 15 per cent on Thursday, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso pleaded for help from the United States and other Western leaders. This week more than \$1 billion in capital has been bleeding out of the country each day.

"We must talk with world leaders," said Cardoso late Thursday. "They must realise we are heading for a world situation that requires firmer decisions, principally from the U.S."

Analysts say the global political leadership required to coordinate a response is currently distracted.

U.S. President Bill Clinton is facing possible impeachment by Congress. Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl has an election later this month and Japan's government is unsuccessfully grappling with its own ailing economy.

Faith in the cash-strapped International Monetary Fund is at an all time low after its multi-billion-dollar rescue plans failed to prevent financial meltdown in Indonesia, Russia and elsewhere this year.

Few in the markets are banking on anything concrete coming out of Monday's meeting of the G-7 — the U.S., Japan, Germany, Britain, France, Italy and Canada. It was not yet clear on Friday who would represent U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin.

The wave of market fear and contagion started in South East Asia 14

months ago and has subsequently drowned Russia, soaked central and eastern Europe and is now seeping into the economies of the G-7.

Investment funds have run scared and countries desperately in need of regular short-term foreign financing — mainly those with high current account deficits — are suffering from a classic credit crunch.

Across the developing world, currencies have collapsed, inflation has soared, debts have not been serviced, social unrest has risen and governments have fallen.

"There has been a qualitative shift in the global crisis," said Stuart Brown, head of emerging markets research at Banque Paribas in London.

"Latin America is under tremendous pressure and that really adds a whole new dimension to the situation," said Brown. "We need some global leadership from Greenspan, Rubin, the IMF, someone, somewhere."

Analysts said that if Greenspan did decide to take action by making U.S. credit cheaper he could boost global liquidity and help reflate what is now a highly integrated global economy.

The underlying fear in the markets was that even if Greenspan did shave interest rates, it would not be by much and that would leave markets foundering.

"While a cut in U.S. interest rates could help to ease the situation, it may require a cut too large for the U.S. authorities to stomach," said Persaud at J.P. Morgan.

AFM prices edge up slightly despite sharp drop in turnover

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Share prices at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) edged up slightly last week despite a sharp 29.2 per cent drop in the turnover, a broker said Friday.

Naim Nageeb, a broker at the stock market, said speculations on low price shares were behind the increase in their prices following a decision by a Prime Ministry committee abolishing the requirement of affixing stamps on purchase deals of shares that are less than 500 fils each.

Nageeb said that AFM trading in the past week focused on the shares of the Arab Bank, the Housing Bank and the Arab Potash Company.

The broker said the firms that benefited from the decision regarding stamps were mostly in the parallel market, where half of the companies' share prices in this sector are below 500 fils.

The stock market's weekly bulletin indicated that turnover amounted to JD3.7 million compared to JD5.2 million during the previous week. The number of shares that were traded in the bourse amounted to 3.7 million.

The bulletin indicated that the average daily turnover recorded in the past week amounted to JD740,000 compared to JD1.05 million a week earlier.

The banking sector received 45.5 per cent of the total trading as it recorded a JD1.6 million turnover amounting. The industrial sector ranked second with a turnover amounting to JD1.6 million, or 44.9 per cent.

The services sector accounted for JD240,000, or 6.6 per cent, and finally insurance sector with

JD110,000, or three per cent.

The Arab Bank, the Kingdom's largest financial institutions, won almost 25 per cent of the overall turnover by registering JD918,458 with its share price reaching JD224.5 from JD221.5 in the previous week.

The Philadelphia Bank emerged second in the banking sector with a turnover amounting to JD310,535 followed by the Housing Bank with JD270,718.

Trading in the industrial sector focused on Arab Potash, Universal Modern Industries and Arab Pharmaceutical Manufacturing with a turnover amounting to JD243,202, JD187,692 and JD165,152 respectively.

The general price index increased by 0.31 per cent up to 177.73 points from 177.18 points.

The banking sector index increased by 2.67 points, or 0.91 per cent, while price index of industrial, services and insurance sectors slipped by 1.3, 0.65 and 0.09 points respectively.

The organised market share of the turnover amounted to JD3.2 million while the parallel market took JD467,213.

The trading in the parallel market focused on the National Multi Engineering Industries, NAMICO, and the Pearl Sanitary Paper Converting with a turnover of JD104,143 and JD80,819 respectively.

Among the 94 firms that changed hands in the past week, share prices of 43 firms recorded increase in their prices, 35 registered a decrease in their prices while the shares of 16 firms recorded no change in their prices.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7250	0.6017	1.4154	137.04	1.5190	1702.70	1.9475	5.7885
DE Mark	0.5797	-	0.3484	0.8207	79.45	0.8789	986.39	1.1286	3.3832
GB Sterling	1.6620	2.8686	-	2.3537	227.96	2.8246	2830.23	3.2371	9.6183
CH Franc	0.7065	121.75	0.4244	-	96.80	1.0717	1201.62	137.44	4.0836
JP Yen	0.0073	1.2588	0.4390	1.0328	-	1.1080	12.42	142.09	4.3265
CA Dollar	0.6883	1.2916	0.4225	1.0566	1.11	-	1270.80	1.4591	4.3265
IT Lira	0.0006	1.8124	0.3531	0.8631	1245.02	0.8913	-	11.43	3.3977
NL Guilder	0.6135	88.56	0.3088	72.69	70.29	0.7797	673.99	-	2.9722
FR Franc	0.1728	0.2961	0.1040	24.4625	23.64	0.2624	33.64	33.6400	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7503	0.3770	3.6395	0.3050	3.6727	1617.50	3.4010
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2886	0.5317	5.1333	0.4302	5.1801	2140.34	4.7969
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1891	-	0.1005	0.57	0.0813	0.98	404.63	0.9069
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8809	9.9491	-	9.66	8.8091	9.74	4025.73	9.0224
Qatar Dinar	0.2748	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0838	1.01	416.95	0.9345
Kuwait Dinar	3.2787	2.3246	12.3911	1.2389	11.93	-	12.04	4975.41	0.9345
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1930	1.0211	1.0126	0.9910	0.0830	-	413.18	0.9260
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4672	2.4714	0.2484	2.3964	0.2010	2.4202	-	2.2412
Egyptian	0.2940	0.2085	1.1027	0.1108	1.0701	0.0897	1.0799	446.19	-

Energy

Oil	Last	Review
Brent	0.00	0.00
W. Texas	14.22	14.30
Bonny	0.00	0.00
Dubai	12.30	12.47
UL Gas	129.00	129.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4601	0.18046	0.37773	36.631
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.46979	0.16385	0.38671	37.3023
KW Dinar	3.2787	5.65611	1.97316	4.64468	448.236
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.57666	1.59642	3.75799	363.504
CY Pound	1.9577	3.3787	1.1779	2.7736	268.183

Metal Prices

Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz's)	294.2	294.7
Silver (oz's)	4.94	4.97
Platinum (oz's)	358	361
AL (3 Months)	1382	1385
CU (3 Months)	1688	0
Zinc (3 Months)	1039	1040
Lead (3 Months)	639	639.5
NI (3 Months)	4310	4330

Libor Fixing

Period	1 -	3 -	6 -	1 -
Cncy	Month	Months	Months	Year
USD	6.6250	6.5899	6.5039	5.4102
GBP	7.6195	7.5078	7.4258	7.2578
JPY	0.4482	0.4375	0.4531	0.4727
DEM	3.4688	3.5000	3.5703	3.6289
FRF	1.6938	1.6328	1.7031	1.7813
CHF	3.5000	3.6430	3.6065	3.6699
ITL	5.2830	5.0870	4.8870	-

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cts
New York	DOW JONES	7912.91	-107.87	-1.34	8030.57	7909.58	8020.78
New York	S&P 500	1011.22	-12.24	-1.2	1027.72	1010.98	1023.48
London	FT-SE 100	8388.5	14.3	0.27	8385.2	8258.4	8344.2
Tokyo	NIKKEI 225	14768.64	-157.95	-1.06	15099.9	14628.6	14913.6
Paris	CAC 40	3762.13	-41.81	-1.09	3822.91	3760.6	3803.74
Frankfurt	DAX	8040.87	-62.97	-1.23	8161.4	8007.11	8103.94

Energy

Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/lbs)	116.83	Spot
Cocoa (\$/ton)	1976	Spot
Sugar (\$/ton)	224.7	Spot
Wheat (\$/ton)	101	Spot
Soya (c/lbs)	24.6	Spot
Tea (stg/kg)	125	Spot
Barley (\$/bsh)	0	Spot
Rice (\$/ton)	415	Spot

JOD Cross Rates

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1712	1.1771
DE Mark	0.408	0.41
CH Franc	0.4985	0.501
FR Franc	0.1216	0.1222
JP Yen	0.5317	0.5344
NL Guilder	0.3617	0.3635
IT Lira	0.4132	0.4153

Industrial Development Bank reports high demand for loans

AMMAN (Petra) — The Industrial Development Bank (IDB) announced Friday that in the past few days it received requests for loans totalling JD12 million from businessmen and investors to finance industrial and tourism projects in the country.

IDB General Manager Rajah Saad said the

requests came close on the heels of a government announcement that it would increase the bank's facilities by JD30 million so that it can grant facilities to the investors and help them carry out projects in the country.

Noting that the high number of requests for loans demonstrates the

actual need by Jordanian businesses for liquidity, Saad said loans will be offered to businesses at an annual interest rate of 10 per cent, down from 15 per cent as charged on loans by other commercial banks.

The bank has formed specialised teams to help market the bank's services in the Sahab

Industrial City near Amman and the Al Hassan Industrial City near the northern city of Irbid as well as the Zarga Chamber of Industry and other parts of the Kingdom.

These teams will be explaining the bank's programmes for financing industrial and tourism projects as well

as handicraft and small business schemes, said Saad.

Saad expects the JD30 million sum to be lent to industrial and tourism businesses within a relatively short period of time.

He indicated that priority for such loans will be for projects that intend to employ the

greatest number of Jordanian workers.

"Instructions have been given to the bank's management to minimise routine and formalities and simplify procedures connected with the granting of loans," the general manager concluded.

A New Food & Beverage Manager at Le Meridien Amman

KENNETH WHITCHER has recently joined Le Meridien Amman as Food and Beverage Manager. Mr. Whitcher comes from a background of 10 years within management & food industry, where during that period his experience had covered seven countries, Amman, Gambia, Bahrain, Pakistan, Malta, Kenya and again back to Amman.



THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- 1 Bear and Berna
- 2 Dull and colorless
- 3 Lillian or Dorothy
- 4 Gland: pref.
- 5 Verdi opera
- 6 Narcissus lover
- 7 Sailing ship
- 8 Genuine
- 9 Stalks in botany
- 10 Well-grounded
- 11 Fleets
- 12 Played the lead
- 13 General Corporation
- 14 Bombshell's color
- 15 Pale
- 16 Shepherd's staff
- 17 Mr. Baba
- 18 Like so
- 19 Shoulder
- 20 warmer
- 21 Related (to)
- 22 Solo of "Star Wars"
- 23 Frogs' kin
- 24 One iron
- 25 Satellite of Mars
- 26 Mediterranean island
- 27 Comes forth
- 28 Speed of sound
- 29 "Brigadoon" lyricist
- 30 Put in order
- 31 Japanese peak
- 32 Winter vehicle
- 33 Comprehension comment
- 34 Charlotte
- 35 Granite novel
- 36 "Jane"
- 37 Flower element
- 38 Seines
- 39 Rip
- 40 "JFK" director
- 41 Oliver
- 42 Thin wire nails
- 43 Total disorder
- 44 In _ of
- 45 Pen fluids
- 46 Taunton's buddy
- 47 Fella
- 48 Dark blues
- 49 Temporary stay
- 50 Knights' wives
- 51 Lips
- 52 Lemon or orange ending
- 53 Saloon seat
- 54 Actor
- 55 Depardieu
- 56 Opening remark
- 57 Flaky, layered rock
- 58 Sank (a putt)
- 59 Donations to the poor
- 60 War wagon?
- 61 Brakes
- 62 SAT test section
- 63 Workplace injury grp.
- 64 Old fighter plane
- 65 "Blondie"
- 66 One-eyed giant
- 67 Els and Kovacs
- 68 Serene
- 69 Impish
- 70 Verdun's river
- 71 Grass cutter
- 72 "The Mod Squad" co-star
- 73 Andrews
- 74 One-eyed giant
- 75 Lively
- 76 Serene
- 77 Impish
- 78 Verdun's river
- 79 Grass cutter
- 80 "Mrs. Dithers of Blondie"
- 81 Yugoslavian dictator
- 82 Lively
- 83 Serene
- 84 Impish
- 85 Verdun's river
- 86 Grass cutter
- 87 "Mrs. Dithers of Blondie"
- 88 Yugoslavian dictator
- 89 Lively
- 90 Serene
- 91 Impish
- 92 Verdun's river
- 93 Grass cutter
- 94 "Mrs. Dithers of Blondie"
- 95 Yugoslavian dictator
- 96 Lively
- 97 Serene
- 98 Impish
- 99 Verdun's river
- 100 Grass cutter

DOWN

- 1 Bark
- 2 Garfield's
- 3 Fella
- 4 Dark blues
- 5 Temporary stay
- 6 Knights' wives
- 7 Lips
- 8 Lemon or orange ending
- 9 Saloon seat
- 10 Actor
- 11 Depardieu
- 12 Opening remark
- 13 Flaky, layered rock
- 14 Sank (a putt)
- 15 Donations to the poor
- 16 War wagon?
- 17 Brakes
- 18 SAT test section
- 19 Workplace injury grp.
- 20 Old fighter plane
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- 86 Lively
- 87 Serene
- 88 Impish
- 89 Verdun's river
- 90 Grass cutter
- 91 "Mrs. Dithers of Blondie"
- 92 Yugoslavian dictator
- 93 Lively
- 94 Serene
- 95 Impish
- 96 Verdun's river
- 97 Grass cutter
- 98 "Mrs. Dithers of Blondie"
- 99 Yugoslavian dictator
- 100 Lively

Peanuts

I SUPPOSE YOU REALIZE THAT SCHOOL STARTS AGAIN NEXT MONTH...

I'M READY, KID.

I COME FROM A FAMILY OF DEDICATED SCHOOL BUILDINGS...

WE'RE A PROUD FAMILY...

OUR OLDER SISTER HAS A NEW CAFETERIA...

Andy Capp

HE DID HAVE A JOB ONCE, BUT IT ONLY LASTED A DAY...

TWO DAYS...

OH, THAT'S RIGHT, BLUE - HE GOT THINGS SO MUDDLED UP THE FIRST DAY THEY HAD TO KEEP HIM ON ANOTHER DAY TO GET IT SORTED OUT...

Mutt'n'Jeff

WHICH ONE OF YOU IS THE BOSS?

I AM, LADY.

OH-ARE YOU REALLY?

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Fool, hommos and falafel remain outside ministry's decision to float food prices

**** THE MINISTRY** of Industry, Trade and Supply has floated the prices of food and beverages at unclassified public restaurants but the decision issued by Minister Mohammad Saleh Horani excluded basic popular meals such as fool, hommos, falafel and musabbahah which were kept unchanged.

Following a number of meetings with the minister, the association which groups restaurant owners decided to put price ceilings of its own and to oblige all public restaurants in the Kingdom to have the floated meals priced accordingly. The ceilings were placed without the intervention of the ministry and the association's cadres will follow up to ensure full abidance by the restaurants.

Bassam Kawash, the association's president, said price lists indicating the ceilings were issued and certified by the association which also distributed them to all public restaurants to be applied accordingly. He added that the self-applied lists were put to avoid prices from free-wheeling after the decision to float them. "They are obliging," Kawash stressed, "and the prices will be reviewed periodically and whenever required in light of changes to costs of production inputs."

Kawash said restaurants had to bear a great burden on a daily basis because prices of production inputs such as grains, oil, meat, vegetables and poultry were floating while prices of meals at public unclassified restaurants were kept fixed.

"The situation has caused a big imbalance and led to real losses for owners of public restaurants making the demand for floating prices a legitimate one," he emphasised.

He described the decision of the ministry to give the association the supervisory and control role, in addition to that of pricing, as a natural right to achieve fairness and justice to all parties and to arrive at a balance in the service, prices and costs.

Praising the decision, Kawash further described the prices flotation move as a totally equitable and a consolidation to the role of the private sector in shouldering its real responsibilities. However, he assured the people that the restaurants will abide by the "objective" prices and that the association will not interfere in the prices of meals which were exempted from the decision. "The prices of all other (excluded) meals will be suitable and there will not be any excessive charges," he indicated noting it is within the responsibility of the association to ensure that prices be reasonable.

In this regard, he said that three committees are currently working in the governorates to formulate a specific mechanism that would unify the prices of meals which were not covered by the decision throughout the Kingdom (Al Rai').

PROSCOPE

Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) You've got a big job ahead of you... something you chose, so no procrastinating! Sure, there's something you don't know how to do, but that's your challenge. You're sharp as a tack today, as usual. This is a tough job look like child's play.

Taurus (April 20 to May 20) There's a lot of confusion out there... stand to one side and let it go roaring by without your Lullaby. You have an unseen advantage. You're patient. You can hold out for better conditions before you make your next move. Don't be pushed into doing something hasty by a frantic friend. It would be way too expensive.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 21) You're in an argumentative mood. You'll argue with anybody today. And since a lot of people aren't sure what they're doing, they may get a little defensive. That's when you tend to go for the jugular. Unfortunately, nothing else gets accomplished. Remember, this game of life is supposed to be fun. Keep it light.

CANCER (June 22 to July 21) It's a madhouse out there. You probably have errands to run and things to do, so plan your schedule before you go. You might even want to let your fingers do the walking. Do as much of your shopping as you can from home. Do whatever you can to make your life easier, and you'll be thankful.

LEO (July 22 to August 21) This looks like a good day to make money. A scheme you've been working on with a partner is about to pay off. Your friends want you to go and help them. That's not a good idea right now. Instead, you need to focus on this money-making idea and put it to work. You can't let it go.

VIRGO (August 22 to September 22) You're getting a lot of acknowledgment today. You might as well get used to it. These conditions are going to be in effect for quite some time. An older person still doesn't seem to want to admit how important you've been. Don't let that bother you. Accept the compliments you're receiving from others and let it go at that.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) The moon is in Gemini again, and one thing Gemini loves to do is travel. This is a good weekend for it. The moon's going into Cancer — the sign of the mother — by tomorrow, so how about calling Mom and inviting her to meet you some place new to both of you? If that's not possible, a surrogate mom will do fine.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) You need to have some conversations with dear friends in private. Figure out your next move, set priorities and do some hard-core planning. It won't be easy to get everybody together, but if you can, you'll find they'll go along with pretty much anything you suggest. So it could be worth the effort.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) The idea of extraterrestrial forces is in effect, it is to push in the same direction the extraterrestrial forces are pushing. That's especially important if it's also the direction you want to go. If it is, you can have the career of your dreams. Figure out what needs to be done next and start learning how to do it.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 20) There are too many things on your list and not enough time to do them all. You need a master plan. Schedule things that don't have to be done immediately for later in the week. If you can, take a half hour to organize your day before you get started. You'll save both time and money.

AQUARIUS (January 21 to February 19) Today could be a day of great excitement. The choice is yours. It could be a mere acquaintance could turn into a best friend. A guy going through this adventure with you. You have to be a team, by the way. It might just be the best you play together. But play to win.

PISCES (February 20 to March 20) It looks like you're going to go to too many places and serve too many masters. Instead of racing all over town, why not have everybody come to your place? It would certainly cut down on the confusion. And over with your mate or best friend. If he or she is the idea, you could solve a complicated problem.

Forecast of September: Sapphire — Lapis Lazuli

JTA begins preparing for visit to Algeria

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Trade Association (JTA) in conjunction with the Algerian Chambers of Commerce and Industry have started to arrange for a visit by Jordanian investors and exporters to Algeria in early November.

JTA General Manager Halim Abu Rahmeh said the visit aims at boosting bilateral economic and trade relations between the two countries.

Abu Rahmeh said the Jordanian delegation will visit several public and private Algerian institutions to get acquainted with the investment and trade opportunities.

He said Jordan had recently signed the minutes of the joint Jordanian-Algerian meeting which called for increasing cooperation between the two countries in trade fields.

Abu Rahmeh called on all Jordanian businessmen to grab the opportunity describing the Algerian market as a "promising one for Jordanian products."

He said that Jordanian products to Algeria reached JD21.5 million last year.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET															
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - JORDANIAN															
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179															
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (05/09/1998 - 09/09/1998)															
WEEKLY REPORT															
DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS		COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET PRICE	NO. OF TRADING DAYS	
HIGH	LOW					EXECUTED									
237.000	120.000	ARAB BANK	18.4	0.00	128	4140	918459	221.50	226.90	220.00	224.50	+3.00	221.850	0.47	5
1.400	1.400	JOR. NATIONAL BANK	13.5	4.22	43	22284	34792	1.66	1.66	1.64	1.66	-	1.651	0.03	5
1.100	1.000	BANK OF JORDAN	64.4	0.00	11	4007	4159	1.00	1.00	1.03	1.05	-	1.038	0.03	2
1.020	0.400	MID. EAST INV. BK.	11.5	0.00	4	1800	1760	1.00	0.98	0.96	0.98	-	0.978	0.02	2
1.500	1.570	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	13.1	6.56	11	5325	8413	1.58	1.58	1.58	1.58	-	1.580	0.02	2
3.200	3.050	THE HOUSING BK.	19.4	3.27	186	88487	270718	3.08	3.14	3.05	3.06	-	3.059	0.08	5
1.500	1.780	JOR. NAT. BANK	0.00	0.00	20	2292	4084	1.80	1.84	1.78	1.82	-	1.782	0.03	5
0.800	0.580	JOR. NAT. BANK	-	0.00	27	128500	76349	0.59	0.60	0.59	0.59	-	0.594	0.01	4
1.700	1.770	JOR. NAT. BANK	17.7	0.00	40	18240	31295	1.74	1.73	1.71	1.73	-	1.713	0.03	5
1.500	1.490	JOR. NAT. BANK	22.0	3.38	48	9863	14262	1.49	1.49	1.43	1.48	-	1.446	0.09	5
0.700	0.750	BEIT AL-MAL (BANK)	3.7	0.00	2	750	563	1.75	1.75	1.75	1.75	-	1.751	0.02	1
0.850	0.600	PEILAND, INV. BK.	1000.0	0.00	139	456363	310535	0.60	0.70	0.60	0.60	-	0.600	4.564	5
MARKET SUMMARY															
BANKS SECTOR					587	742871	1677378	INDEX NUMBER : 295.10		CHANGE : + 0.91%					
1.450	1.300	JORDANIAN INSUR.	9.4	5.00	6	50200	69276	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	-	1.380	1.068	2
2.820	2.680	JOR. FRENCH INSUR.	7.5	9.26	5	900	2610	2.73	2.70	2.66	2.70	-	2.678	0.041	3
1.120	1.100	RAJF LAFIT INSUR.	8.2	0.00	6	15682	17140	1.12	1.10	1.10	1.10	-	1.100	0.778	2
1.940	1.900	ARAB LIFE INSUR.	9.3	0.00	3	2700	5238	1.94	1.95	1.94	1.95	-	1.947	0.02	1
1.400	1.400	JORDAN GULF INSUR.	-	0.00	2	10000	14950	1.48	1.50	1.45	1.50	-	1.495	0.444	1
INSURANCE SECTOR															
					254	75792	169034	INDEX NUMBER : 127.27		CHANGE : - 0.57%					
1.540	1.500	JOR. ELECTRIC POW.	9.6	5.37	52	38249	57060	1.50	1.50	1.48	1.48	-	1.492	0.291	5
2.700	2.240	IBRD ELECTRICITY	12.5	4.93	2	300	416	2.24	2.13	2.03	2.03	-	2.080	0.007	2
1.800	1.800	SHIPPING LINES	60.4	4.68	2	1232	2107	1.80	1.71	1.71	1.71	-	1.710	0.018	1
0.920	0.780	WELT. PORTFOLIO	31.3	0.00	104	70760	54154	0.78	0.80	0.74	0.78	-	0.780	1.450	5
0.770	0.480	WELT. PORTFOLIO	17.7	0.00	40	18240	31295	0.48	0.50	0.48	0.48	-	0.480	0.230	2
0.320	0.300	JORDAN INV. TRAD.	-	0.00	17	29800	8917	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.30	-	0.299	0.876	5
1.120	1.100	MID. EAST HOTELS	210.9	0.00	7	2704	2990	1.12	1.12	1.10	1.10	-	1.105	0.049	2
2.920	1.980	ARAB INV. TRAD.	9.8	2.03	8	13764	36849	1.98	1.97	1.95	1.97	-	1.951	0.068	4
1.930	0.890	SARAA EDUCATION	38.5	0.00	7	3500	3138	0.89	0.90	0.89	0.89	-	0.890	0.040	2
1.220	1.200	UNITED CO. FOR FINS.	5.0	9.73	25	7400	8293	1.20	1.22	1.20	1.23	-	1.221	0.148	5
1.170	1.050	UNITED FOR FINS.	1.4	5.99	2	2250	2453	1.09	1.09	1.09	1.09	-	1.090	0.313	1
SERVICES SECTOR															
					254	176021	178987	INDEX NUMBER : 106.75		CHANGE : + 0.60%					
2.620	1.930	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	11.9	5.90	30	9290	18005	1.94	1.97	1.93	1.97	-	1.947	0.015	5
1.700	1.400	JOR. FURNITURE INDUS.	14.5	0.00	8	1132	2905	1.40	1.60	1.60	1.60	-	1.598	0.093	2
0.950	0.780	ARAB FOODS CO.	20.5	0.00	30	59400	243201	0.78	0.80	0.77	0.80	-	0.799	0.071	5
10.790	10.550	JOR. PETROLEUM	18.2	0.00	31	2424	25562	10.56	10.65	10.51	10.54	-	10.545	0.038	5
1.000	0.950	WOLFEIN INDUSTRIES	11.0	7.08	3	1000	1274	0.95	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	0.951	0.026	2
1.230	1.200	WOLFEIN INDUSTRIES	67.9	0.00	2	140	1406	1.20	1.15	1.15	1.15	-	1.149	0.024	2
0.600	0.600	JOR. WOODSTOCK KELLA	7.4	3.94	5	403	2291	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.60	-	0.600	0.010	3
2.880	2.650	ARAB PHARM. INDUS.	7.4	2.81	136	62134	163152	2.65	2.70	2.61	2.67	-	2.656	0.046	5
1.100	1.100	JOR. CHEMICAL INDUS.	5.0	9.77	15	11350	12739	1.10	1.14	1.12	1.14	-	1.122	0.227	4
2.750	2.450	ARAB DRUGS	10.0	10.29	2	140	276	2.45	2.70	2.70	2.70	-	2.686	0.060	2
1.110	1.100	JOR. PAPER MANUFACT.	9.2	9.01	6	38050	41858	1.11	1.11	1.10	1.11	-	1.100	1.171	1
2.030	2.030	JOR. PAPER CARBON	11.0	0.00	2	3293	4421	2.03	2.03	1.95	1.95	-	1.950	1.110	1
1.500	1.480	GENERAL MINING	117.8	4.17	7	1275	1154	1.48	1.48	1.41	1.48	-	1.492	0.073	3
7.100	6.850	ARAB CHEM. INDUS.	7.7	7.19	4	400	2770	6.85	6.95	6.85	6.85	-	6.850	0.237	2
5.800	5.610	ARAB ALUMIN. IND.	6.9	6.15	30	14208	79506	5.61	5.69	5.56	5.65	-	5.596	0.273	5
1.850	1.700	ARAB ALUMIN. IND.	12.4	14.71	7	4595	7809	1.70	1.70	1.70	1.70	-	1.699	0.077	2
0.450	0.390	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	13.9	0.00	29	24600	9908	0.40	0.42	0.40	0.41	-	0.406	0.739	5
2.400	2.400	GENERAL INVESTMENT	15.0	3.05	2	1250	4143	2.40	2.45	2.38	2.38	-	2.314	0.018	2
0.800	0.770	ARAB PAPER CORP. IND.	24.4	0.00	5	32750	26200	0.78	0.80	0.80	0.80	-	0.800	0.066	2
0.320	0.300	NATIONAL STEEL INDUS.	-	0.00	55	43850	15415	0.30	0.32	0.31	0.32	-	0.312	0.096	2
0.410	0.410	NATIONAL STEEL	-	0.00	9	4427	1691	0.41	0.41	0.37	0.41	-	0.382	0.074	3
0.370	0.300	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	-	0.00	55	43850	15415	0.30	0.37	0.32	0.35	-	0.352	1.096	5
0.400	0.390	JOR. NUCLEAR INDUS.	-	0.00	1	100	37	0.39	0.37	0.37	0.37	-	0.370	0.003	1
0.810	0.760	WELT. PORTFOLIO	31.3	0.00	1	100	83	0.80	0.83	0.83	0.83	-	0.830	0.007	1
0.790	0.780	WELT. PORTFOLIO	17.7	0.00	40	18240	31295	0.78	0.79	0.78	0.78	-	0.780	0.062	5
0.650	0.600	JOR. NUCLEAR INDUS.	7.0	0.00	92	11867	32399	0.60	0.65	0.60	0.60	-	0.600	1.818	5
1.310	1.280	ARAB PHARM. INDUS.	12.9	8.74	8	3940	5230	1.28	1.27	1.25	1.26	-	1.260	0.161	4
0.560	0.470	WELT. PORTFOLIO	-	0.00	9	5600	2679	0.47	0.49	0.47	0.48	-	0.478	0.280	3
0.400	0.340	WELT. PORTFOLIO	10.0	9.52	294	31713	147692	0.34	0.35	0.34	0.34	-	0.340	0.286	5
0.530	0.500	JOR. PETROLEUM	18.2	0.00	31	2424	25562	0.50	0.52	0.50	0.52	-	0.511	0.044	4
1.250	1.220	WELT. PORTFOLIO	8.8	7.94	19	32776	40714	1.22	1.26	1.25	1.26	-	1.254	0.462	4
0.690	0.600	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	9.2	15.38	13	67010	12173	0.61	0.65	0.60	0.65	-	0.628	0.308	5
1.200	1.160	EL-MAY RAILWAY INDUS.	41.9	0.00	7	6950	8256	1.20	1.19	1.18	1.19	-	1.188	0.093	4
0.980	0.950	WELT. PORTFOLIO	6.3	8.34	30	12790	17880	0.95	0.98	0.91	0.92	-	0.921	0.107	5
0.890	0.870	WELT. PORTFOLIO	11.0	0.00	12	35650	35812	0.87	0.89	0.88	0.88	-	0.889	0.092	5
0.800	0.780	JORDAN STEEL	9.5	8.24	58	77000	62314	0.78	0.85	0.77	0.85	-	0.821	0.513	5
0.640	0.640	AL-KHAYAT INDUST.	34.7	0.00	141	142258	94584	0.64	0.67	0.65	0.65	-	0.645	1.582	5
0.570	0.530	MID. EAST COMPLEX	19.1	0.00	26	22800	12329	0.53	0.54	0.54	0.54	-	0.555	0.101	4
0.950	0.840	ARAB INV. FOOD TRACS.	32.1	0.00	1	5000	6750	0.84	0.95	0.95	0.95	-	0.950	0.083	1
DURING THE LAST 3 WEEKS															
HIGH	LOW	COMPANY NAME	P/E	DIV	NO. OF CONTRACTS	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPENING PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSING PRICE	CHANGE	AVERAGE MARKET PRICE	NO. OF TRADING DAYS	
0.810	0.800	EXPORT & FIN. INDUS.	14.5	0.00	14	17124	12059	0.80	0.80	0.80	0.80	-	0.800	0.084	3
1.010	1.010	ISLAMIC INSURANCE CO.	94.5	0.00	1	500	500	1.01	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.000	0.017	1
0.430	0.430	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	-	0.00	3	100	40	0.43	0.41	0.41	0.41	-	0.400	0.031	2
0.430	0.390	JOR. TRADE FAC.	-	0.00	8	18050	7470	0.39	0.41	0.40	0.41	-	0.404	0.046	2
0.280	0.240	ARAB PAPER CORP. IND.	-	0.00	53	16500	60502	0.25	0.26	0.25	0.25	-	0.254	0.151	5
0.510	0.510	WELT. PORTFOLIO	31.3	0.00	11	37930	19703	0.51	0.52	0.52	0.52	-	0.520	0.344	4
1.000	1.000	KARA FOR INVESTMENT	67.6	0.00	1	200	206	1.00	1.03	1.03	1.03	-	1.030	0.001	1
1.300	1.250	CENTURY INV. GROUP	-	0.00	2	3350	6087	1.28	1.22	1.22	1.22	-	1.220	0.021	2
0.430	0.270	ARAB FOOD & MED.	-	0.00	43	35077	10612	0.28	0.32	0.28	0.31	-	0.303	0.702	5
0.250	0.230	ARAB INV. TRAD.	27.6	0.00	26	17938	4670	0.23	0.25	0.23	0.24	-	0.236	0.295	5
1.110	1.100	JOR. INDUS. HANDBOOK	11.0	13.15	13	60000	55422	1.10	1.10	1.09	1.09	-	1.092	0.019	2
0.210	0.210	WELT. PORTFOLIO	5200.0	0.00	13	8150	2110	0.21	0.24	0.24	0.24	-	0.259	0.326	4
0.410	0.380	KIDZEST PHARM. INDUS.	-	0.00	14	61340	29443	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	-	0.480	0.446	4

U.S. OPEN

Sampras-Rafter match should be showcase of tame

NEW YORK (AP) — Pete Sampras stands on the cusp of history in the U.S. Open. Patrick Rafter, the defending champion, stands in his way.

In what promises to be the

semifinal that will have the feel of a final.

The last 11 days have seemed little more than a setup for Saturday's match, which features two of the best serve-and-volleyers of

only against an opponent who defeated him a month ago in Cincinnati, but also against critics who had written him off as an over-the-hill champion.

"It's time, this is the U.S.

Mark Philippoussis won a thrilling tiebreaker in the fifth set to defeat Thomas Johansson late Thursday night in a match featuring 50 aces, setting up an encounter with Carlos Moya in the other semifinal.

Philippoussis slammed 30 aces, including 11 in the final set, in his 4-6, 6-3, 6-7 (3-7), 6-3, 7-6 (12-10) win over Johansson, who had 20 aces and 15 double faults. Philippoussis hit one serve at 132 mph, only to be outdone by his opponent whose 136 mph serve was the fastest of the tournament.

"I got the first serves in when I needed it. I kept the pressure on and it finally paid off," Philippoussis said at the end of the 3 hour, 26 minute match.

The other quarterfinal lasted just 90 minutes. No. 10 Moya, who won this year's French Open and was a finalist at the Australian Open, made just 15 unforced errors in a 6-4, 6-3, 6-3 win over Magnus Larsson. Moya faced only one break point in the match, and never lost his serve.

Until this year, Moya was known mostly as a clay-court player. His results at the Australian and U.S. Opens show how he has developed into a top player on all surfaces.

"I grew up on clay, so I think I'm always going to have the game on clay," Moya said. "If you ask me right now, I prefer hard. If you ask me two weeks ago, I prefer clay."

The women's semifinals are set for Friday, with top-seeded Martina Hingis facing No. 3 Jana Novotna and an all-American match between No. 2 Lindsay Davenport and No. 5 Venus Williams.

When Sampras lost in the

second round of the French Open in late May, the whispers about the end of his reign atop men's tennis became louder. His stretch as No. 1 briefly had been broken earlier in the year by Marcelo Rios, and Sampras appeared vulnerable for the first time in years.

But he won a record-tying fifth Wimbledon title in July, and is within two victories of two more records — Jimmy Connors' mark of five U.S. Open titles and Roy Emerson's record of 12 Grand Slam singles titles.

Sampras, who will remain No. 1 in the world no matter what happens the rest of this tournament, has not lost in a Grand Slam semifinal since 1996 at Wimbledon.

Rafter had lost eight straight times to Sampras before beating him in the final of an ATP Tour event in Cincinnati in mid-August, a match that ended with a disputed call. Rafter's serve was called out, but the umpire overruled the call to give Rafter the ace and the match.

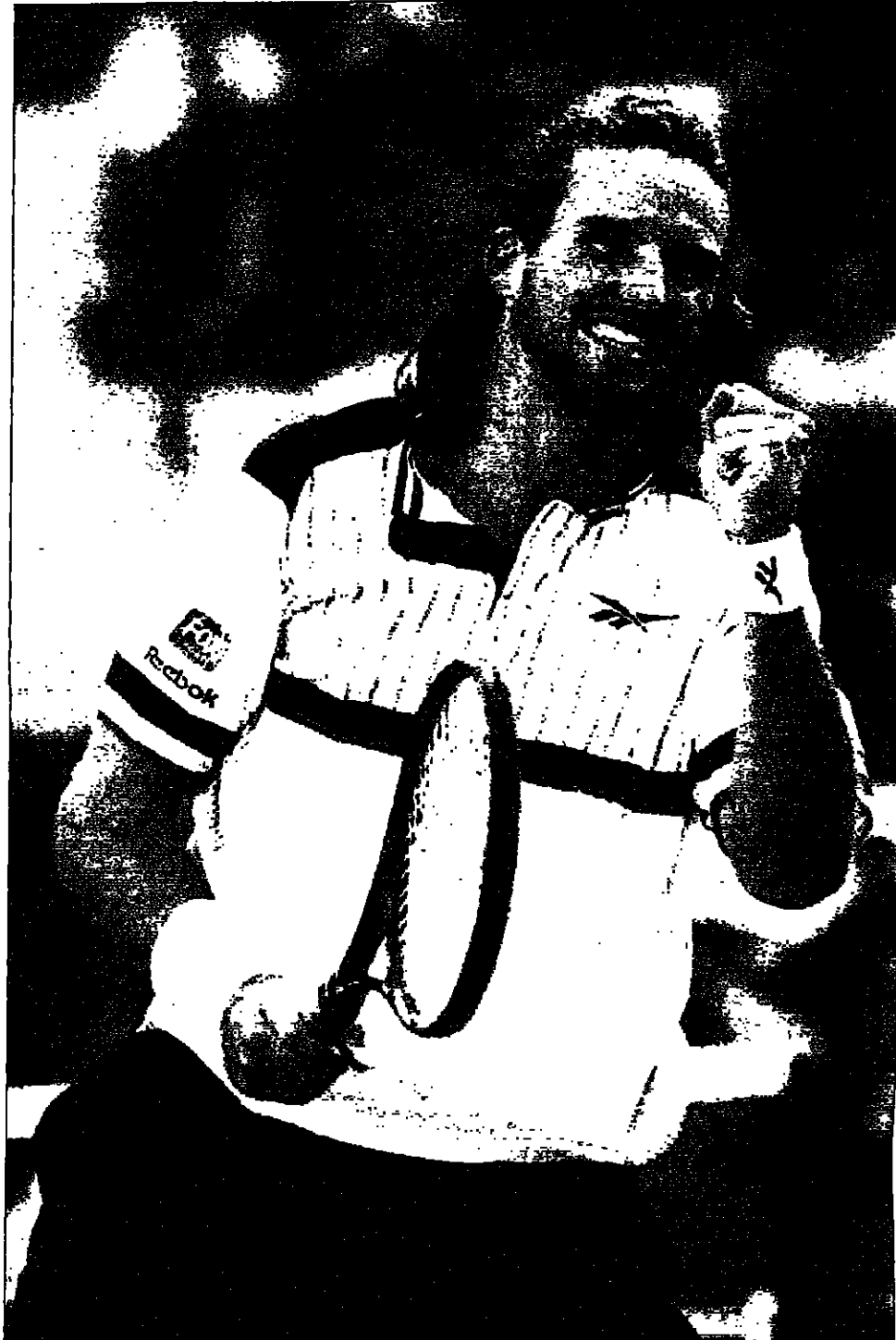
Sampras stood at the baseline for several seconds, making the victorious Rafter wait at the net, and then refused to shake the umpire's hand.

Rafter said that win will change his attitude heading into Saturday's semifinal.

"I won't go on the court feeling as intimidated as I had before," he said. "But Pete is a different kettle of fish altogether. I had a great win last year. He's done it for the last six years."

Rafter, whose speed will be pitted against Sampras' power, had to rally from a two-set deficit in the first round against Hicham Arazi. Since then, he has dropped just one set in four matches.

Rafter is trying to become the sixth man of the Open Era to successfully defend a



Number three seed Patrick Rafter of Australia celebrates during his victory over number 12 seeded Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden Wednesday at the U.S. Open in Flushing Meadows. Rafter won 6-2, 6-3, 7-5 (AFP photo)

U.S. Open singles title.

That's an accomplishment that would impress even

Sampras.

"That's really a true sign for me on how I look at a

player, is winning a major if you can come back and do it again," Sampras said.



Pete Sampras

showcase match of a tame tournament that so far has provided few surprises—or dramatic battles. Sampras and Rafter meet in a men's

their generation. It pits the hottest players in men's tennis against each other.

And it could provide revenge for Sampras — not

Open, this is the big moment of the year for me," Sampras said. "This is what the year boils down to for me."

Doubles partners Hingis and Novotna set for Open semis

NEW YORK (AP) — Already in one U.S. Open final together, Martina Hingis and Jana Novotna bid for berths in another on Thursday, this time against each other.

an intriguing matchup of two of the biggest hitters on the women's tour.

Just as intriguing was the pairing of Novotna and Hingis, partners one day, rivals the next.

have to learn how to separate. I think that you have to learn how to deal with the pressure when you are playing singles and then just to be able to go out there and play doubles and enjoy it."

next couple of weeks, but it gives you confidence for life."

Conversely, that loss and another suffered against Monica Seles in the semifinals of the French Open, left Hingis shaken.

She won three of the four Grand Slam tournaments a year ago, but struggled this season and arrived at the Open with fresh resolve.

"I have the feeling I'm getting better again, so that gives me a lot of confidence," she said after defeating Seles in the quarterfinals. Now she has some getting even to do with Novotna.

"Against Jana, I feel pretty good," she said. "I want that revenge back."

The Davenport-Williams match could be held in a basketball court. Both are over 6 feet and rely on power tennis. Amanda Coetzer, beaten by Davenport in the quarterfinals, was suitably impressed.

"I mean, not so much the size, but the way she hits the ball is intimidating," Coetzer said. "She hits it really hard and deep. Points are over pretty quickly. You often feel like you don't really have a say in what's going to happen at the end of the point. She's gained a lot of confidence."

So has Williams. She made it to the final here a year ago before losing to Hingis and has demonstrated a more rounded game this year, often abandoning the baseline to come to the net for important points.

"I think that I'm more wiser," she said. "I think I make more intelligent decisions. I'm able to really fight out there."

"A different player," Davenport said. She has a 4-1 lifetime edge on Williams and arrived at the Open as the hottest player on the women's tour. After reaching the semifinals at the French Open and quarterfinals at Wimbledon, she won three hardcourt warm-ups in California, beating Hingis and Williams in two of the finals. She had a string of 14 straight victories before losing in the semifinals at New Haven to Steffi Graf. "I feel I've done everything I can up to this point to try and win this tournament," said Davenport, who has never reached the final of a Grand Slam event. "I'm going to give it my best shot."



Martina Hingis

U.S. Open Glance

NEW YORK (AP) — Highlights of Thursday's play in the 14 million U.S. Open tennis championships:

Weather: Clear and windy with a high of 70.

Attendance: Day: 17,573. Night: 20,269. Total: 37,842.

Results: Carlos Moya beat Magnus Larsson 6-4, 6-3, 6-3 to move into the semifinals. He will face Mark Philippoussis, who beat Thomas Johansson 4-6, 6-3, 6-7 (3-7), 6-3, 7-6 (12-10) in the semifinals. Pete Sampras will face Patrick Rafter in Saturday's other semifinal. Serena Williams and Max Mirnyi won their second straight Grand Slam mixed doubles title by beating Lisa Raymond and Patrick Galbraith 6-2, 6-2. Serena's sister, Venus, along with her partner, Justin

Gimeistob, won the year's first two mixed doubles titles, at Melbourne and Paris.

State of the Day: Since the 1993 Australian Open, Pete Sampras has advanced to a Grand Slam semifinal 12 times and won 10. The only losses were in the 1995 U.S. Open to Andre Agassi and the 1996 Wimbledon semifinals to Richard Krajicek. Sampras has won 11 titles in 16 attempts when advancing to the semifinals.

Quote of the Day: "We have big respect for each other. And I think that's why we make such a good team when we are playing together and why we are such great opponents when we play against each other." — Jana Novotna, on facing her doubles partner, Martina Hingis, in the semifinals.



Jana Novotna

Hingis, the Open's defending champion and No. 1 seed, faced her doubles partner in a singles semifinal after teaming with Novotna to defeat Lisa Raymond and Rennae Stubbs 6-2, 6-2 in the semifinals of the women's doubles. No. 2 seed Lindsay Davenport faced No. 5 Venus Williams in the other semi-

Novotna was not surprised. "I think when we got together, that's what you have to expect," she said. "If player No. 1 and No. 2 in the world get together in doubles, you have to expect that you will have to meet at maybe every single tournament, play against each other."

"So that's something you

The last time they played against each other was at Wimbledon, when Novotna defeated Hingis in semifinals on the way to her first Grand Slam title. That championship changed perceptions about Novotna, so often a tough-luck loser in previous Slams. "It gives you confidence," she said, "not only for the

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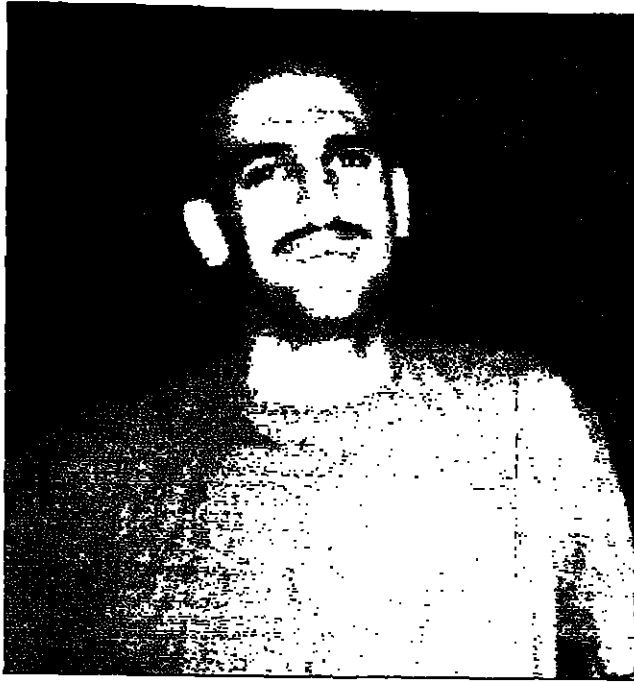
Audeh chosen for 'Arab All Star' basketball team

By Randa Naffa

AMMAN — Jordan's Basketball star Maen Audeh is set to participate in the "Arab All Stars" basketball team to compete against a team from the U.S. National Basketball Association (NBA), Jazira/Aramex Basketball Club, said in a statement Friday.

Audeh was selected because of his outstanding performance and his accomplishments on the national, Arab and international levels, the statement said.

The game will be played at the Lebanese Sporting Club in Beirut as part of the celebrations for the opening of the indoor Basketball arena of Beirut Sports City.



Maen Audeh

Sources at the sporting club said that Audeh showed great sports spirit during the

West Asia Tournament held here last February, said the statement.

"The honouring comes as an incentive for the pivot player to exert more effort," the statement said.

Audeh who was selected as the Best 1997 Basketball Player in Jordan, led his Jazira Club in winning the Kingdom's championship at that same year, according to the statement.

Since 1995 Audeh took part in international tournaments, and participated in 13th Asian Tournament in Korea and to score the famous shot which qualified Jordan to play in the World Youth Championship.

Daoud brothers win top two spots in National Rally

By Roufan Nabhas

AMMAN — Jordan's champion Mohammed Daoud and co-driver Khaled Zakaria driving a Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution Friday took first place in the 2nd LG National Rally organised by the Royal Automobile Club of Jordan (RACJ).

Ahmed Daoud and co-driver Malek Hariri in a Ford Escort Cosworth came in second, and Ibrahim Muhawesh and co-driver Nasser Shewi in a Ford Escort Cosworth took third place.

Six cars out of 14 finished the race after a heated competition between the Daoud brothers.

In the first three stages it was Ahmed in the lead, but the fourth stage saw the two brothers tie.

Mohammed stepped up the pressure on Ahmed in the final stages to take the lead.

Raed Haddad and Burhan Abu Qoura were forced to drop out of the race for technical reasons.

The rally covered a distance of 94.79 km with three sections and eight special stages passing through Alook, Rumman and Sheileh areas.

Organisers called it a success.

"I am happy with the results, and the competition was really hot," RACJ spokesperson Bader Rasheed told the Jordan Times.

"The fact that only six cars finished the race shows that it was a difficult one," he said.

The next national rally will be held October 30th with another competition between the Daoud brothers.

Ahmed took first place in the first national rally.

"We hope to see more people in the next event — the Pepsi Speed Test next month," Rasheed said, adding that the club would like to see women drivers participate in the upcoming events.

"We never lost hope of having more women in the rallies but the problem of sponsorship was the main reason for their absence," he added.

Awards and prizes were presented to the winners Friday evening in a special ceremony at RACJ headquarters.



Mohammed Daoud (L) and co-driver Khaled Zakaria (R) celebrate their victory (photo by Abdullah Ayoub.)

Jose Maria Jimenez wins Tour of Spain sixth stage

XORRET DEL CATI (AFP) — Spain's Jose Maria Jimenez of the Banesto team on Thursday won the 201.5km sixth stage of the Tour of Spain between Murcia and XORRET DEL CATI.

Jimenez broke away in the closing kilometres during the ascent of the col de Cati, the first serious climb in the race.

Jimenez, who won a stage last year, also takes over the leader's jersey from Italy's Fabrizio Guidi and is 31 seconds ahead of compatriot Roberto Heras and 36 seconds in front of Laurent Jalabert of France.

The teammate of former road race world champion Abraham Olano finished 27 seconds ahead of second-placed Heras and 46 seconds ahead of a group headed by third-placed Jalabert.

Friday's seventh stage is a 185km stretch from Alicante to Valencia.



Spanish cyclist and Banesto team member Jose Maria Jimenez raises his arms after winning the sixth stage of the Tour of Spain on Thursday (AFP photo)

Jordan in court to face lawsuit

CHICAGO (AFP) — Basketball superstar Michael Jordan appeared in court here Thursday to face a civil lawsuit by producers of a basketball movie who charged that he reneged on a contract to act in the film.

The case pits the Chicago Bulls player against the production company Heaven Corp., which claimed that it lost millions of dollars when Jordan backed out of a 1987 contract to appear in the movie "Heaven is a Playground."

Lawyers for Jordan say the two sides had mutually agreed to postpone filming until the summer of 1990 until a detailed contract was completed.

The movie, filmed in Chicago's Cabrini-Green housing project in 1990 and released in 1991, was pilloried by critics and flopped at the box office.

Jordan made no statement as he arrived in court, accompanied by his wife, Juanita, and his agent, David Falk.

He has countersued the production company, charging that it lied to him when he was told financing for the movie had been secured.

The trial, which is expected to last several weeks, got under way with more than 30 potential jurors being questioned by judge Richard Neville and attorneys for the two sides, told reporters.

Ferrari fans gloat as Coulthard spins off

MONZA (AFP) — Ferrari fans were left gloating here on Friday as their drivers shone during free practice for the Italian Grand Prix — while their "enemy number one" David Coulthard ended up in the gravel.

Michael Schumacher, who finally made his peace with Coulthard on Thursday after a bitter war of words over their collision in the Belgian Grand Prix, timed 1 minute 25.246 seconds, just behind Ferrari teammate Eddie Irvine's 1:24.987.

Coulthard, despite spinning off and curtailing his session, still managed third fastest (1:25.690) before the session was washed out by rain.

His McLaren teammate, Mika Hakkinen, the world championship leader ahead of Schumacher, managed fifth fastest (1:26.159). The race goes ahead on Sunday.

Ferrari fans last week gave Coulthard a hot reception during testing here, hurling abuse and blaming him for the crash with Schumacher at Spa which ended the German's chances of winning the race.

But the situation was defused when Schumacher, who had earlier accused Coulthard of trying to kill him, shook hands with his rival and retracted his earlier allegations.

A few banners here on Friday attacked Coulthard but there was no open abuse.



Michael Schumacher drives his Ferrari around a curve on his way to set the fastest time in the first timed practice session for the Italian Grand Prix on Friday (Reuters Photo)

Wherever McGwire goes, adoring crowds follow

CINCINNATI (AP) — Right now, the new home run king is also the King of the Road.

For Mark McGwire, wherever he goes, the rest of the season is shaping up as one extended victory lap. A day after McGwire hit No. 62, the St. Louis Cardinals left for a five-game trip to Cincinnati and Houston.

If anything, the celebration picked up even more steam.

"That's a fun way to play," the Reds' Bret Boone said after McGwire livened up another otherwise woeful season at sold-out Cinergy Field Wednesday night.

"You know everybody's here for one thing.

"You can't draw 50,000 people every night, but it's a thrill when it happens."

It would be tough to top the 11-minute lovefest that brought the game to a temporary halt following McGwire's record-breaker on Tuesday night in St. Louis. But the fans in Cinergy Field tried. Oh, they tried.

The cheering was so intense when McGwire faced Pete Harnisch in the first inning Wednesday night, he had to step out of the batter's box three times. Each time he waved to the crowd and tipped his cap, before the ovation finally subsided and the game could continue.

"It kept getting louder and louder," McGwire said. "It's absolutely incredible, the

reception.

"You never really put yourself in these situations, so you don't know how to react."

Don't expect anything less in Houston, where the Cardinals begin a three-game series that'll magically boost attendance for the NL Central leaders just as they have at every other stop.

The same goes for Milwaukee, where the Cardinals will play their final road games Sept. 18-20.

"Nobody's broken the home run record in the last 37 years," said catcher Tom Lamkin, one of McGwire's closest friends on the team.

"Yeah, you cheer for your home guy, but you've got to cheer for somebody who's done something like that."

On Wednesday, the Reds had their first weekday, non-opening day sellout since Pete Rose got his record-breaking 4,192nd hit in 1985.

Thursday was a repeat with the bonus of a McGwire batting practice session that attracted about 10,000 early birds — most of them packing the left-field stands — as McGwire hit nine homers in 17 swings.

In the right field stands, where McGwire has zero homers this year, one on Wednesday read "Swing Late." In the power alley, there was "Caution, Hard Hat Area." "Way To Go Mark. Hit It Here" and "Thanks For

Saving Baseball, Mark."

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